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SWOS
CREATOR JON HARE REVISITS THE AMIGA'S GREATEST FOOTY GAME

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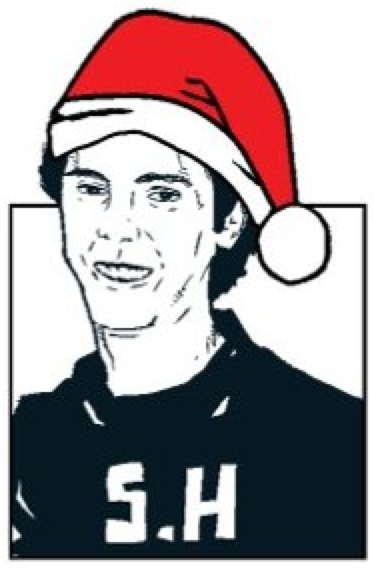


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THE RETROBATES FAVOURITE NINTENDO CHARACTER



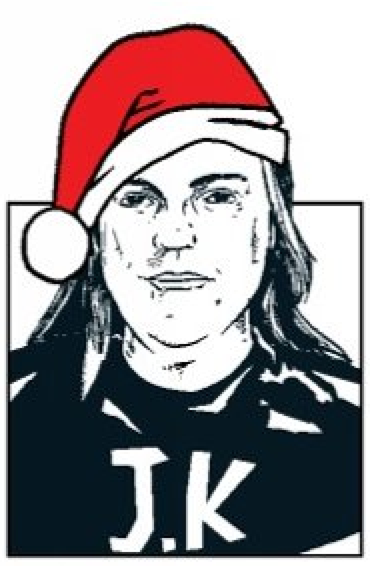
DARRAN JONES
Link's my favourite Nintendo character. I'm a huge fan of his games, and always play as him in any *Smash Bros* game.
Expertise:
Juggling a beautiful wife, two gorgeous girls and an award-winning magazine
Currently playing:
Need For Speed: Most Wanted
Favourite game of all time:
Strider



STUART HUNT
Donkey Kong for me – not only am I huge fan of the arcade game, but it was an important game for Nintendo breaking into the US.
Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them
Currently Playing:
Assassin's Creed III
Favourite game of all time:
Assassin's Creed III



DAVID CROOKES
Mario. No more clowning around: no gamer can resist the charm of a Mario. He's-a making-a history.
Expertise:
All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Atari Lynx and PlayStation
Currently playing:
Molyneux's *Curiosity* and losing coins like mad
Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



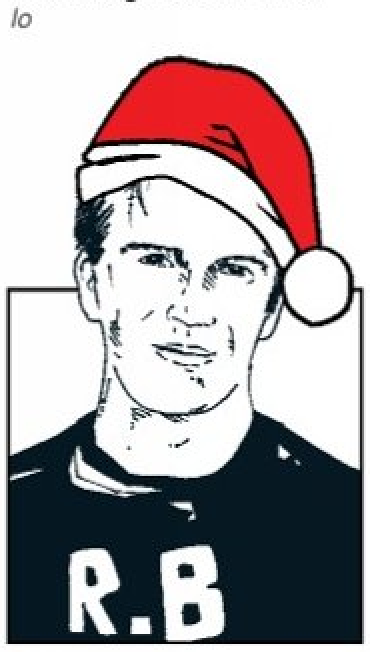
JASON KELK
My favourite would be Toadette because I played far too much *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!* on the GameCube and usually used her as the driver.
Expertise:
Bizarre pieces of 8-bit hardware
Currently playing:
Jeep Command
Favourite game of all time:
Io



PAUL DAVIES
Mario, because he always (used to) signify an awesome new Nintendo console. *Mario 64* was the pinnacle for me.
Expertise:
Banging my head against a brick wall
Currently playing:
Halo 4
Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N Ghosts



PAUL DRURY
My faithful Venusaur (née Bulbasaur) for being at my side throughout my epic 100+ hour battle through *Pokemon Red*. Beautiful beast, brilliant game.
Expertise:
Facial hair
Currently playing:
Dishonored
Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



RICHARD BURTON
Dry Bones – the skeletal remains of undead Koopas. Death and zombification comes to Mario's world... and it can drive a mean kart...
Expertise:
Things, stuff and nonsense
Currently playing:
Amidar
Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner

LOADING...



It's hard to get excited about Christmas when you're still in the murky greys of November. And yet, this is the most excited we've been for quite some time.

Partly it's because there's a brand new console out, from a company steeped in a rich retro heritage. The console is the Wii U, and the company – Nintendo – has some of the most enduring characters of all time. We've not only decided to feature them on our gorgeous Wil Overton cover, but we've also investigated the origins of the various characters and franchises that power both *Nintendo Land* and *Super Mario Bros U.*

Another reason to get excited is the recent reveal that one of the most loved 8-bit games of all time is planning to make a return via Kickstarter. *Elite: Dangerous* is looking like a certainty and we've managed to speak to *Elite* co-creator David Braben about his plans for his incoming game. The other exciting news this month is the recent revelation that Julian Gollop, master of the strategy game, is rebooting *Chaos* for a new generation of gamers. You can find out about his plans in the Retro Radar section.

So it's a shame that with all this excitement we have said goodbye to Mike Singleton, who sadly passed away this October. Hopefully you'll find his ten-page tribute a fitting ending to his legendary genius.

Enjoy the magazine,



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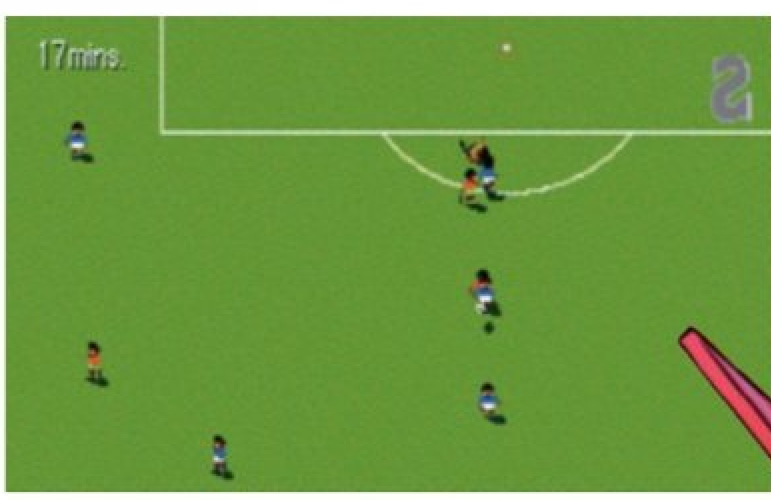
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As Nintendo launches Wii U, we take a look at the origins of the characters behind Super Mario Wii U and Nintendo Land

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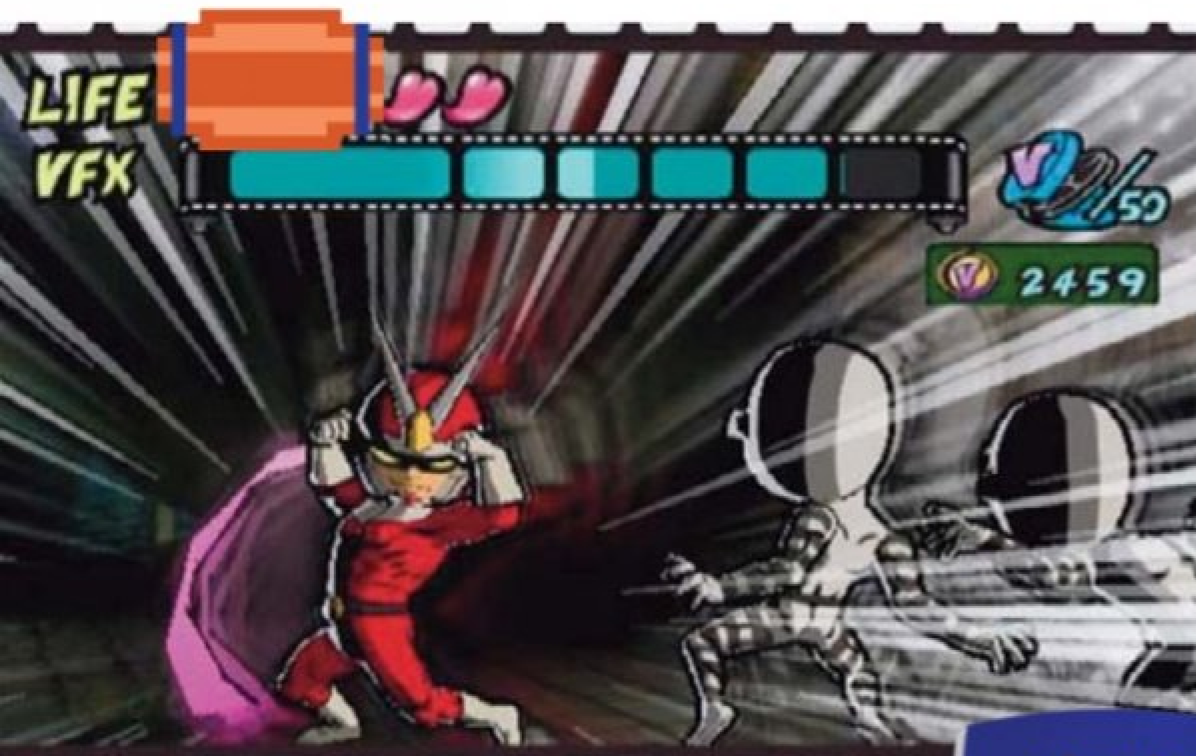
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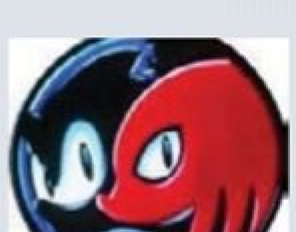
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ESSENTIALS

RETRO RATED





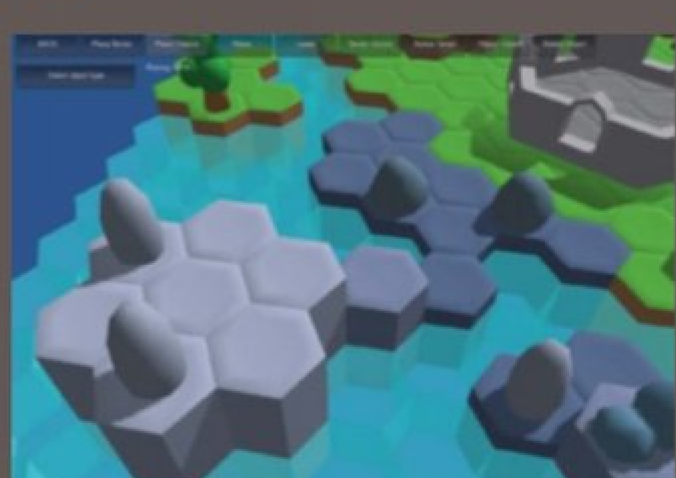
retroradar

>> GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



>> Goodness gracious me. This month marks the return of two huge games – Elite and Julian Gollop's Spectrum classic Chaos. Needless to say we're as excited as an excited person who has a special reason for being excited

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ELITE RETURNS

WE SPEAK TO DAVID BRABEN ABOUT ELITE: DANGEROUS

David Braben sent the internet into a frenzy of activity on 6 November when the BBC revealed that *Elite* would be returning. Of course, David has been talking about *Elite 4* since 1998, but this time he has the power of crowd-funder Kickstarter behind him, allowing those who have been requesting an *Elite* game for all these years to finally put their money where their mouth is. David is requesting £1.25 million to make *Elite* and is planning to release *Elite: Dangerous* in March 2014, for Elite's thirtieth anniversary. The response has been mixed, with some people not happy with the way that David has presented his game. We decided to catch up with David to discuss *Elite: Dangerous* and his plans for it.

So why has *Elite IV* taken so long?
Well we started in 2000 and did some work on it. Essentially what's happened is that we've worked on it on and off in the intervening time as a skunkworks project, mostly building technology to make the game possible. And the problem with a non-official project is that other projects get prioritised and people have to work on those if you know what I mean.

Aside from being a clever reference to *Elite*'s scoring system, what does 'Dangerous' represent?
Well there will still be a ratings system, so it will carry over. But yes, it really is just a reference to the original. [Laughs] I suppose also it's been a working title for the game internally for a very long time.

So why turn to Kickstarter?
It's both a way of funding a game, which is great, which doesn't have a publisher middleman, if you like. Our experience with publishers with the *Elite* game hasn't been very good. If you think right at the start that the first thing publishers asked for, was they wanted score, they wanted three lives, because that's what the games at the time all seemed to command. They looked at the games that were big and said 'We want it to be like those'. I think things don't really change. Understandably, publishers are quite risk-averse. They want the game to be like a previous success. One of the great things with Kickstarter is that



» [Spectrum] David hasn't revealed how many planets and star systems there will be, but we're guessing it will be a lot.



you can show the audience is there before you make the game.

Does the *Elite* Kickstarter have anything to do with Chris Roberts of *Wing Commander* fame recently securing his own project with his *Star Citizen* game?
No. We were actually thinking of Kickstarter before that, but Kickstarter has only just come to the UK.

We're told that games cost tens of millions to make, yet you're planning to make *Elite: Dangerous* for a fraction of that. Is that definitely going to be enough money to make the *Elite* game that you want?
Yes it will. First, it depends on the process. If you look at very heavy duty story-based games, you need to model lots and lots of locations. We did a game last year, *Disneyland Adventures*, which had a huge number of people on it and that's because we have to create vast amounts of models, for what we often call in the industry 'content'. The beauty with something like *Elite* is that we can use procedural generation to generate a great deal of that content.

Kickstarter projects occasionally get picked up by publishers once they've generated enough interest. If you were in a situation where you hit your target and someone like Microsoft or Sony would you consider their offer?
Well, we certainly want to do this on our own. The point really is that when it comes to each platform you need some help from the platform provider. One of the [benefits] of the PC is that we can go all the way ourselves. When you make a game, whether it's for Sony, for Microsoft, for Apple, you still need approval to go onto the platform. So they have to at some point be part of the process. Obviously we've talked to them, but the point about this is to make a game for ourselves the way we want to make it.

“What I absolutely expect to happen is for there to be a glut of space games after this!”

We've not seen a pledge for a novella version. Will there be one? Would you like us to write one for you?
[Laughs] Interestingly, that is something we're thinking about. So there'll be more discussion about that shortly.

How will *Elite: Dangerous* differ from previous versions? What's the big thing you're planning?
Well we plan to add a lot of little things, but the big thing, the main one is multiplayer and all the things that come on from that. That requires a lot of architecture, servers. All that sort of thing. We've actually got all the servers up and running now.

So how integral will multiplayer be to the *Elite* experience?
I think people will look back and go 'Wow' with the multiplayer. Look at a game like *Call Of Duty*, look how little people play the campaign these days compared to multiplayer.

So it will also have a single-player campaign?
You will be able to play the game single-player, we're not talking about what that involves. I expect that the most exciting experiences will be multiplayer.

So will it have player vs player?
Yes. Getting the balance for that working is a challenge. We've thought a lot about it and about how that works because there's nothing more annoying for a new person to [play] a game and die within ten seconds.

When *Elite* first came out, there was nothing else like it and now you have games like *EVE Online* and Chris Roberts' incoming project. What will *Elite* do to stand apart from its peers?
Well first I think what's interesting are the other games; really good luck to Chris Roberts for *Star Citizen* as well. It's a good thing. Not a bad thing. Space games are deemed to not be successful because there hasn't been a successful space game for a long time. Now, having said that, there hasn't been a space game for a long time. [Laughs] So it's one of those self-fulfilling prophesies. What I absolutely expect to happen is that there will be a glut of space games after this [laughs] if they're successful, which I have every expectation of them being.

People are obviously putting their own money into this to fund it. Are you worried about that aspect?
Oh, we'll do the game and the game will be great. There will be some people, me included, whose expectations are sky high. I'm never happy with a game that comes out.

Even *Kinectimals*?
It was lovely. But you always think: 'I wish we fixed this' Do you know what I mean? Having said that, I really do want [*Elite*] to be successful and for people to be happy. Because a lot of people, and this is including me as well, the original *Elite* is something they enjoyed from their childhood.

Now onto the hardcore questions… Will the game begin in Lave with 100 credits, as with the original?
[Laughs] We haven't decided that, but it is certainly on the cards.

Will there be century ships?
Hmmm… possibly! That's more… that would be a mission thing than actually that they'd be there all the time.

Will there be trumbles?
[Laughs] Probably not.



» Early screens suggest that Frontier Developments are effortlessly capturing the spirit of the original game.



Here's the bio...
Iain Lee has been a fervent gamer since he was tiny. And that was a long time ago. In between playing computer games and collecting crap from eBay, he has presented Channel 4's *The 11 O'Clock Show* and *Rise*, and currently does bits of stand-up as well as presenting the *2 Hour Long Late Night Radio Show* on Absolute Radio at 11pm.

---- E L I T E ----



Hi there, my name's **Iain Lee**. You might remember me from Thumb Bandits, The 11 O'Clock Show and Absolute Radio, but now I'm here to confess my love for retro



Kickstart Me Up

How exciting. I've just turned on Twitter and waded through the usual abuse (example: @furyac3 – 'b*st*rd Iain f*ckin get your teeth fixed you ugly waste of space lee') and actually come across some rather entertaining and heartwarming stories.

First up I've been reading tweets about the new Molyneux folly *Curiosity: What's Inside The Cube?* Or *The Cube*, as it's frequently been referred to. Not the excellent Phillip Schofield game show, but some weird thing that I don't understand, partly because I have made no attempt to understand it, where you chisel away at a cube and win something like a car or a house or a Ginsters. No one knows. But you can spend a LOT of money trying to win this thing.

Videogame writer and podcaster David Turner, host of the excellent if slightly overlong *Joypod*, has started a twitter account dedicated to *Curiosity*. He is posting updates and pictures taken from inside the game and some of them are very funny. Actually, most of them are simply of jizzing knobs – hardly mature but it makes my inner 15-year-old chuckle. It's well worth following so have a look at @OnTheCubeBlog The second tweet that made me happy and realise that not everyone is as angry and as sad as @furyac3 came from web designer @paulclare. He posted the following: 'New version of classic game *Elite*? On Kickstarter? Yes I feckin' think so!'

He also posted the link to the Kickstarter fund. I was dubious but had a look and was surprised to see that yes, Braben is finally pulling his finger out and working on a massively multiplayer online version of the best game ever made.

I've never been able to hide my enthusiasm and love for *Elite*. From the Boxing Day when my nan gave it to me, right up until now, it has held a special place in my heart. Yes, it was all but impossible to park your bloody Cobra Mk.III unless you had a docking computer, but it did things a BBC Micro was not supposed to do. It was huge. It was captivating. It had the most amazing Vector graphics. And it has done what few games have, completely stood the test of time and looks as good today as it did then.

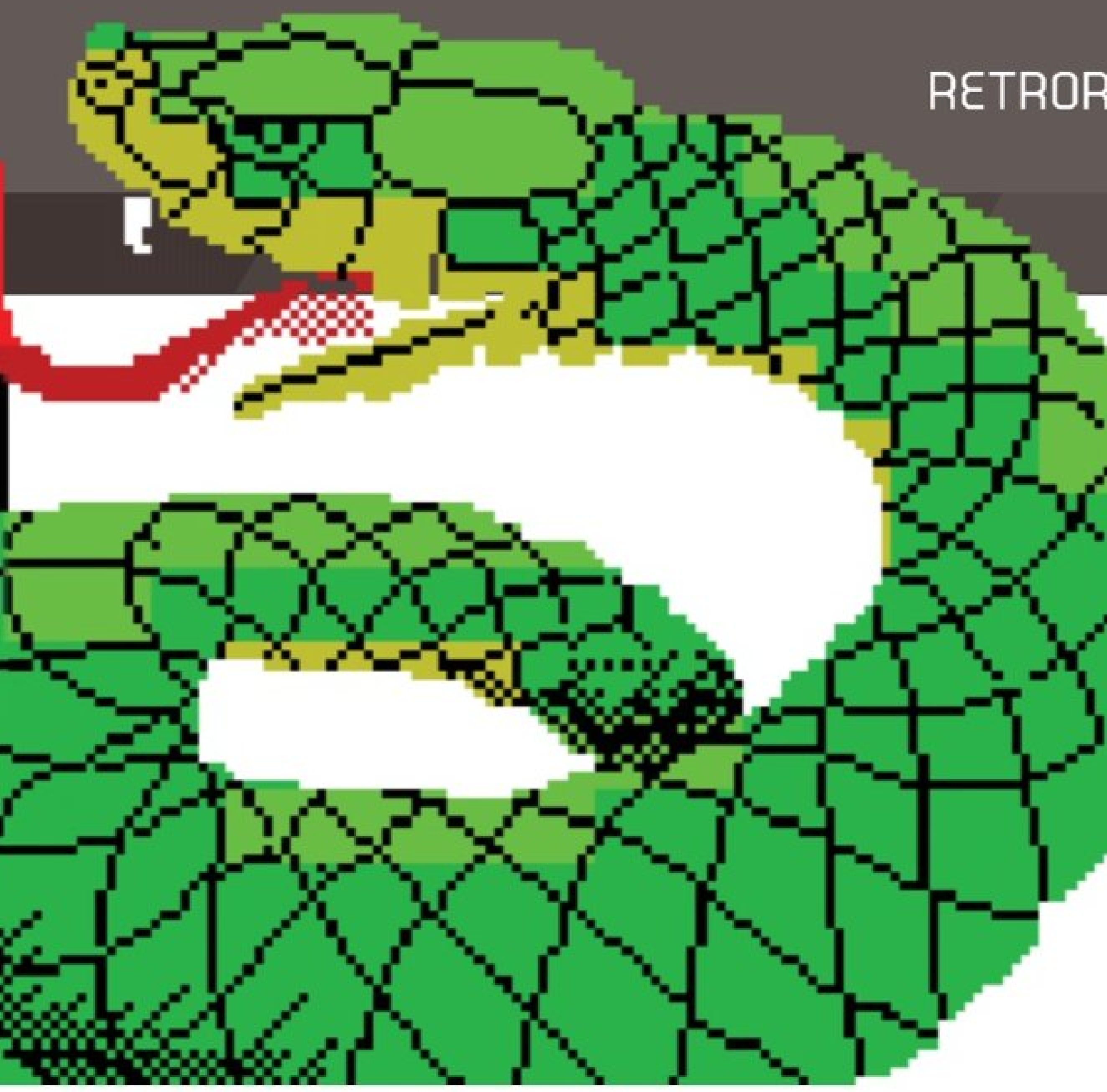
And now Braben is suggesting he is working on a multiplayer version? Wonderful.

But, all is not rosy. He is asking for a staggering £1.25 million pounds. When I went on there he had received £79,865 with 59 days to go. That's quite a gap. Without the total, it doesn't look like it will happen. I'm not sure if my £30 will be make much of a difference but I gave it freely anyway. Want to help? Then visit www.kickstarter.com and search for *Elite: Dangerous*.

Go on. Do it for me. Please.

I've never been able to hide my enthusiasm and love for Elite







» **[Spectrum]** It might look simplistic, but the gameplay packed into *Chaos* is so satisfying.

CHAOS REVISITED

THE KING OF STRATEGY DISCUSSES HIS NEW PROJECT

Julian Gollop, the classic developer behind such strategic hits as *Rebelstar, Laser Squad* and the *X-COM* franchise, recently revealed on his blog that he's making a brand new sequel to his superb Spectrum hit *Chaos: The Battle Of Wizards.*

First released in 1985, *Chaos* took the strategy themes first found in *Rebelstar*, but married them to a classic fantasy setting, which saw wizards battling other wizards by using spells that could do anything from summon magical creatures, to enhance a wizard's stats. Praised upon its release, it received a sequel five years later in the form of *Lords Of Chaos*.

"*Chaos Reborn* is part sequel and part reboot," begins Julian when we asked him about his new project. "It is a reworking of the original, in the sense that it retains the core systems and gameplay – random spell selections, arena multiplayer combat, illusions, law and chaos shifts, and so on. The classic eight player arena battle will be there, but this time with network multiplayer – live or asynchronous. However, it is a sequel in the sense that some other elements are added, such as terrain and elevation, and a bigger selection of spells. The major addition though, is a fully fledged single-player adventure mode, called 'Kingdoms of Chaos', in which the player will journey through a land battling enemy wizards, finding useful artefacts, building his spell knowledge and power in a quest to defeat the Wizard King."

Now, some 27 years after the original game was released, Julian has decided that it's time to revisit his cult game and give it the loving update it so obviously deserves. It also marks a return to the old days, with Julian leaving Ubisoft where he worked on titles like the recently released *Assassin's Creed III: Liberation* so he could spend more time with his wife, who recently gave birth to twins.

So does Julian enjoy this return to the good old days? "Absolutely. However, I only see this as the first phase of development. I will need to put a team together to create all the graphics, animation and sound the game will need. I will certainly consider Kickstarter to help with this, but the timing has to be right. I want to get to a reasonable prototype stage with some demonstration of the art direction for the project before launching a funding campaign. I hope to make playable versions of the game publicly available as I progress, because the feedback will be invaluable."

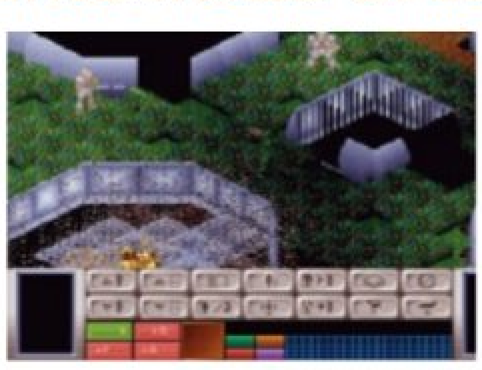
We'll have a more in-depth interview with Julian, covering the entire *Chaos* series in issue 112. In the meantime check out *Chaos Reborn*'s updates at www.gollopgames.com.

Remake this OTHER JULIAN GOLLOP GAMES WE'D LOVE REMADE



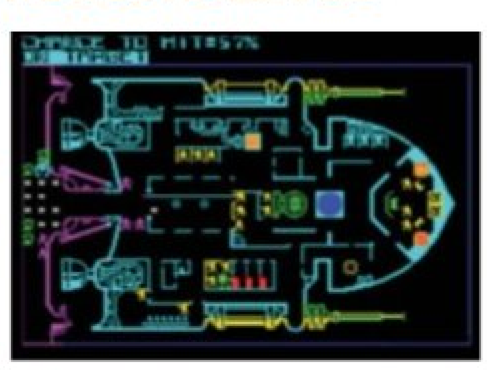
Laser Squad

Many Spectrum gamers cut their strategy teeth on this superb 8-bit hit. Masterfully designed and with lots of clever gameplay mechanics, it's a superb game that would go down a treat on iOS.



UFO: Enemy Unknown

Also marketed as *X-COM: UFO Defense* in the US, for many this remains one of the best turn-based games ever made. It's unclear if Julian would still have access to the IP, but we'd love to see this in handheld form.



Rebelstar: Tactical Command

This was an excellent GBA game that we feel never got the love it deserved. It's another slice of Gollop goodness that needs a bigger audience, and an iOS release would easily fix that.



Lords Of Chaos

As Julian is making a kind of sequel/reboot for *Chaos*, he may be inclined to attempt the same thing with its ace actual sequel. We'd imagine an update depends on the success of *Chaos Reborn*.

retrocolumns

>> PAUL DAVIES GIVES HIS VIEWS ON THE RETRO WORLD

Here's my bio…
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.



Hello, retro gamers. My name is **Paul Davies**. I used to be the editor of C&VG and have also worked on a number of classic gaming magazines over the years

How retro can you go?

Just like the blues of Robert Johnson, or the films of Alfred Hitchcock, the oldest videogames should be enjoyed as they were originally created. But, as you know, it's never that simple.

We love gaming because it's such an ever-changing landscape, endlessly challenging expectations, while honing those ideas that we savour the most. Part of it all, though, is the whole technology merry-go-round, a new bundle of metal and wires to hook up to your telly or tuck into a travel bag.

Without really intending to, we all end up as collectors to varying degrees: a stack of boxes in the attic, drawers full of gizmos, and shelves containing boxes of uneven shapes and sizes. And we can't complain because no gamer that I know would ever want one single platform to rule them all. All this so that we can get at the good stuff, right, without anything standing in the way… apart from all the boxes and wires and the best TV you can justify. Just to see *Vagrant Story*, *Mark Of The Wolves* or *Super Mario Kart* in their true glory.

I sold my Dreamcast, and boy do I regret it now that *Shenmue 1* and *2* are off the menu. However, there are remakes to consider as a ray of hope for gamers such as I who want to remember the experience as though good as new. Apparently there's an HD version of *Shenmue* heading to Xbox LIVE soon. But instead of feeling elated, I'm actually kind of worried, because I really want to play *Shenmue* as I originally saw, heard and felt it, rather than having it 'improved'.

The current 'Blah, Blah HD Collection' trend is a nice idea. And I use the word nice because it's as unimaginative as the HD Collection concept that you can take or leave without worrying at all. I don't think it's necessary – just a thing that publishers seem keen on doing to relive their past glories. But I personally always want my games to be as authentic as possible with very few exceptions. This means PSone games that look like the polygons are ready to fall apart; Saturn games that look like Weetabix; Super NES games that slow down and flicker, and Mega Drive games that sound frankly frickin' terrible.

That said, I did hugely enjoy playing through *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* on the 3DS recently. But it was enough for me just to see a perfectly crisp and brightly-coloured rendition of the tastefully tarted-up graphics on a tidy little flat screen. I used to get in a sweat about missing that little sliver of graphics down the left-hand side of my Sony CRT, and worried if my colour, contrast and brightness settings were spot on. I really did worry about that more than rescuing Zelda.

So, anyway, accepting that authentic hardware can never be a part of the equation with the re-release of older games, all that I really want is a full library of all the games I ever played, as true to the original code as possible. For this, I would gladly accept a global platform, standardised for Xbox, PlayStation and PC. Ain't gonna happen though, so I guess there's always eBay.

I'm going to miss these silly consoles when the world grows up.



Without really intending to, we all end up as collectors: a stack of boxes in the attic, drawers full of gizmos…



★A MOMENT WITH...
Kevin Toms

This month, Paul Drury polishes the boots of Kevin Toms, the man behind the hugely successful Football Manager series

Who is Kevin Toms?

His bearded face was a fixture in gaming magazines in the Eighties, proudly beaming next to adverts for *Football Manager*, *Software Star* and *President*, released through his own company, Addictive Games. Thirty years after kicking off the genre, Kevin is currently working on a football management game for iOS.

You've decided to return to the game that first brought you fame. Why now?
Because I feel I've got more to do. I can write a new game that's different to what I've done before but it's still a *Football Manager* game. I hope to match the playability of the original, but when that was done, it was frozen in time. This is a game I feel I can evolve by updating it on the App Store. I can be in communication with players through the social media side which I couldn't do before. It was all letters or seeing people at shows!



You began a whole gaming genre with *Football Manager*. Are you proud of that or do you ever feel restricted by being synonymous with that game style?
No, I don't feel typecast and it is a source of pride. Why shouldn't it be? I didn't see myself as starting a genre but that's what happened. I also wrote *Software Star* and *President*, so I see no reason why I can't write other types of games, but I haven't finished the job with *Football Manager*. I want to do another game in my style, keeping the simplicity but having the subtlety underneath.

What do you feel is your proudest achievement in the industry?
The Spectrum version of *Football Manager*. That's still where my heart is. There was no significant commercial pressure when I wrote it and the little stickman graphics I can link back to drawings I did at the back of the class when I was at school. And it was still selling ten years after release.

And your biggest disappointment?
The commercial pressure of doing the *Football Manager World Cup Edition* and not being able to complete the game in the way I wanted to. There was too much of a load on me, too many things were expected.

Which industry veteran do you most admire?
Sir Clive Sinclair. With the ZX81 and Spectrum, he created the computer games development industry in the UK. Without those machines, it wouldn't have happened. We have one of the biggest games industries in the world and it's built on that foundation. I know he had a tough time with other products later but that was because he was ahead of his time.

You're remembered for frequently putting your own face in your game adverts. Is that rampant egotism?
I was actually very shy at the time, which people find hard to believe! I don't think I've got a significant ego but I do believe in programmer recognition. I had the power to do it myself because it was my company. I see a strong analogy between people that write books or make music and those that write games. People interest people.

Will your face be in your new game?
I hadn't even thought of that until you just mentioned it! I'm using my name so yes, I'm exploiting me. It's just a question of whether to use a photo.

If you do, will your famous beard return?
The beard and I parted company a long time ago. It's living in South America at the moment. With a Brazilian.

" I haven't finished the job with Football Manager. I feel I've got more to do "


» [Spectrum] There's an endearing quality to the replays.



» [Spectrum] Can you spot the digs at other games publishers in *Software Star*?

For more on Kevin's reboot of his classic *Football Manager* game for iOS, plus his work on Philips' intelligent lighting project Hue, see www.kevintoms.com


» Kevin's update of *Football Manager* will be available on iOS soon. See his site for details.

5 December – 1 January

retrodiary

>> A month of retro events both past and present

5 December 1978
■ Chris Curry and Hermann Hauser form Cambridge Processer Unit Ltd. Its trading name is Acorn Computers Ltd.



5 December 2008
■ Ubisoft's platform arcade adventure, *Prince Of Persia*, is released in Europe on PS3 and Xbox 360.



6 December 2012
■ Due for release in America is SNK Playmore's new Neo Geo X handheld. It comes with twenty of SNK's titles.

7 December 1984
■ Ultimate Play The Game released its isometric arcade adventure *Knight Lore* on the Spectrum.





8 December 2006
■ *The Legend Of Zelda: Twilight Princess* is released in the UK on the Nintendo Wii.



8 December 2009
■ Konami's survival horror game *Silent Hill; Shattered Memories*, is released on Nintendo's Wii.



9 December 1988
■ Incentive Software released *Total Eclipse* on the Spectrum. It was the third game to use Freescape, its ingenious 3D game engine.



11 December 2009
■ Finnish software developer Rovio Entertainment releases *Angry Birds* on Apple's iOS.



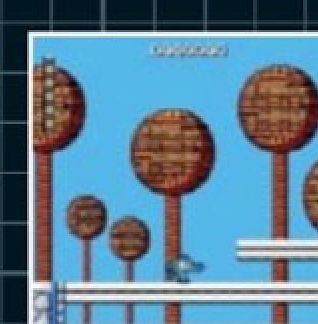
13 December 2003
■ Sega releases *OutRun 2*, the sequel to their much loved racing game, into arcades.



14 December 1994
■ Capcom unveil its latest coin-op, the vertically scrolling World War II aeroplane shoot-'em-up *1942*.



16 December 1982
■ Protect the flowers in *Green House*, Nintendo's newest Game & Watch handheld release.



17 December 1987
■ Capcom's Mega Man (aka Rockman) makes his first video games appearance on the NES.



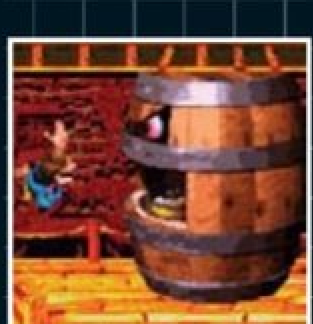
17 December 1987
■ Square's epic RPG *Final Fantasy* makes its first appearance debuting on the NES.



18 December 1993
■ *Dragon Warrior* (aka *Dragon Quest*), the first game in the highly acclaimed RPG series, is released on the SNES… but only in Japan…



19 December 1986
■ *Knight Lore* is released on the Famicom Disk System in Japan.



19 December 1996
■ *Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble* is released by Rare on the SNES across Europe.



20 December 1987
Sega released the first game in its own RPG series, *Phantasy Star*, on the Master System.



31 December 1982
■ Gottlieb released its isometric colour-changing platform game coin-op *Q*bert*. Watch out for Coily the purple snake…

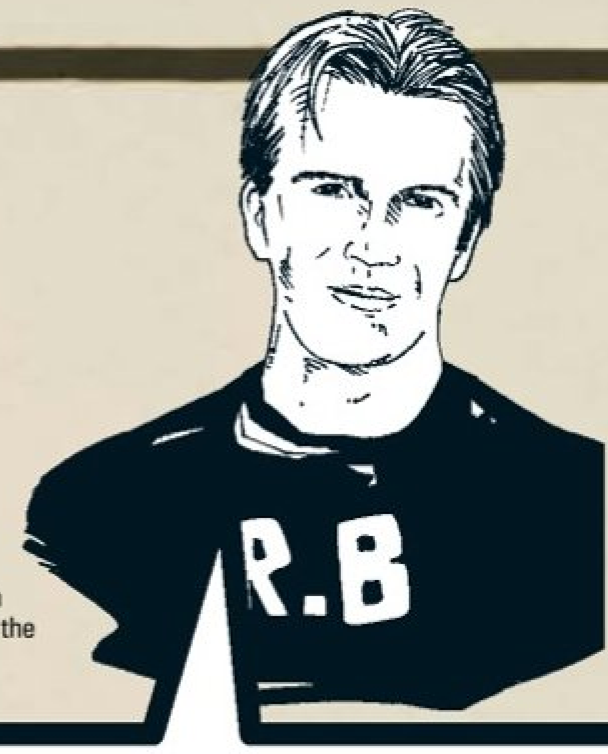


1 January 2004
■ New from Live Publishing – **Retro Gamer** issue one!



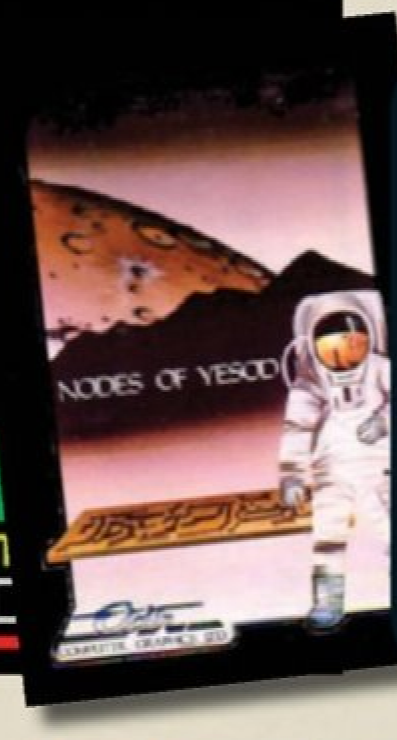
3 January 2013
■ New issue of **Retro Gamer** hits the streets.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES





» [Spectrum] Collecting alchiems was hard enough without the impediment of the thieving red spaceman.



AUGUST 1985 – Lenslok cocks up, Gremlin gets springy, US Gold scores a World Cup own goal, Vortex hits the highway, Dynamite Dan explodes on the scene and Crash parodies Sinclair User. Richard Burton has a thing on a spring…

THE LATEST NEWS FROM AUGUST 1985

With software piracy high on the agenda of many a software house, ASAP Developments devised what it thought might deter tape-to-tape copying. its Lenslok system was an image-refracting piece of plastic that you placed over a jumble of graphics on your computer screen. Looking through the plastic lens would reveal a two-character code which you would type in allowing the game to run.

The first product that used Lenslok was Firebird's *Elite* for the Spectrum. Unfortunately an entire production run of the game was bundled with the wrong Lenslok deeming it completely unplayable. Lenslok was used several more times by various software houses and although it did work, reading the code often proved difficult.

Firebird also had news of its intention to convert two of Ultimate's Spectrum titles to the C64; *Sabre Wulf* and *Underwurlde*, with both due out before Christmas. Both were duly released but were criticised for looking too similar to the Spectrum versions despite playing rather well.

CRL wanted you to come up to the lab and see what's on the slab with its release of the game of the film of the cult that is *The Rocky Horror Show*. The game placed you in Frank N' Furter's castle/spaceship which you explore to find the many scattered pieces of the De-Medusa machine. Find them all and your significant other half, be it Brad or Janet (you got to choose who to play at the start) would be released from their stone-like state,

Rocky Horror was a pleasant surprise for a movie-licenced game being a fun unassuming arcade adventure featuring all the main characters and elements of the movie. Just watch out for the Zen Room and its flying mushrooms, man… Amstrad, Spectrum and C64 were catered for.

Gremlin Graphics released the equally fun *Thing On A Spring* for the C64. You played Thing who has to collect parts of a jigsaw to escape a toy factory run by an evil goblin. It was a hugely playable with big cute colourful graphics. However, the cherry on the top of this particular piece of top notch gaming cake was Rob Hubbard's superb music.



» [Amstrad] Hot patootie, bless my soul, I really love that rock and roll.



» Lenslok promised an end to software piracy. Instead, it gave us squinting at screens at odd angles.

Odin Computer Graphics released their Ultimate-esque arcade adventure, *Nodes Of Yesod*. The graphics and packaging all smacked of the Stampers' style yet *Nodes* was arguably better than the games it was influenced by. In *Nodes*, you controlled Charlie the Spaceman who must collect alchiems, the keys to the huge lunar caverns he must explore, then on to find the monolith and stop it from broadcasting Earth's secrets to its alien owners. Capture yourself a wall-munching moon mole and you're good to go... The Spectrum version received great reviews, with later C64 and Amstrad versions both doing well.

US Gold had news of two future releases. The first was to be the official game of the FIFA 1986 Mexico World Cup. US Gold had a year to come up with a football game to dazzle and impress and yet it managed to lash it up so right royally that a superficially altered copy of Artic's hopeless *World Cup Football* was passed off as its lavishly boxed, stickered and poster-laden *World Cup Carnival*.

Their second game was a movie based licence for Steven Spielberg's newest movie, The Goonies. The resulting platform puzzler wasn't hugely successful but was playable despite some decidedly ropey graphics. It was released on the C64 in time for Christmas while Amstrad and Spectrum owners had another year to wait.

AUGUST 1985 NEWS



15 August saw Richard Branson's attempt to make the fastest sea crossing of the Atlantic end with his Virgin Atlantic Challenger boat capsizing in heavy seas just 140 miles away from the finishing line at the Sicily Isles off Cornwall with the record in sight. He, sailing companion Chay Blyth and the crew were rescued by a passing ship from treacherous seas.

Branson tried again the following year in his new Virgin Atlantic Challenger II, this time winning the Blue Riband (the trophy for breaking the record and not the chocolate biscuit…) in a time of three days, eight hours and 31 minutes.

1 August saw the final episode aired on US television of the animated series *Battle Of The Planets*, an adaption of the Japanese anime series *Science Ninja Team Gatchaman*. The 85 episode-long series began in September 1978 introducing us to the world of G-Force, a five strong team of young people; Mark, Princess, Tiny, Jason and the verbally challenged Keyop, who protect Earth from the evils of Spectra and their devious leader Zoltar.

Keyop was voiced by Alan Young, who later went on to voice Haggis McMutton in the excellent point-and-click LucasArts adventure, *The Curse Of Monkey Island*.

28 August saw the world premiere of the dark fairytale movie *Legend* starring Tom Cruise. Forest boy Jack must defeat the Lord of Darkness, played by Tim Curry, who wants to destroy daylight and marry Lili, the girl Jack has got the unicorn horn for…



» [Spectrum] *Highway Encounter* was a lovely detailed game, albeit a smidge easy.

Vortex Software and Costa Panayi had Highway Encounter readied for release. It was a cleverly designed alien-infested rolling road game featuring your Dalek-like drones who must deliver a bomb destined for the alien mothership at the other end of the highway. You must clear the way of aliens and obstacles for them. It was magnificent in every aspect with its lovely crisp isometric graphics.

Continuing the isometric theme, The Edge gave an early preview of its arcade adventure, *Fairlight*. Developed by Swedish programmer Bo Jangeborg, it promised an atmospheric jaunt with you playing an adventurer seeking the Book Of Light to escape Castle Avars. When it did arrive, on Spectrum, C64 and Amstrad, it was superb.

Also arriving for the big three 8-bit machines was Taskset's *Super Pipeline II* which saw you take control of Foreman Fred as he attempts to patch up a leaky pipeline while being attacked by baddies ranging from spanners to snails. Fill the barrel at the end of the pipeline and you're off to the next level.

Dynamite Dan from Mirrorsoft was released and although being yet another platform game it was a beautifully crafted beast with delightful sound effects and music with many nice touches including teleporters, lasers, rafting and a hard as nails safe-breaking finale with Dr. Blitzen. *Dynamite Dan* was an explosion of sound and colour and was certainly on a par with *Jet Set Willy* for platform gaming excellence.

The August 1985 issue of Newsfield's *Crash* magazine spoofed magazine rival *Sinclair User* with its impressively dedicated four page send-up titled *Unclear User*. It had a great Oliver Frey re-working of *SU*'s original cover and constantly referred to *SU*'s knack of getting exclusive reviews implying they were basing these reviews on incomplete pre-production versions. *SU*'s publisher EMAP got the hump and sent a court injunction to Crash Towers.

Crash was recalled, the offending pages removed and the magazine redistributed. Unfortunately for EMAP, more than half the magazines had already been bought or sent to subscribers and although EMAP received an out-of-court settlement, the situation benefited Newsfield, with sales of *Crash* surging while *SU* came out of it looking like it had suffered a humour bypass.



» [Spectrum] Rod Bowkett's kaleidoscopic infusion of sound effects and sprites made *Dynamite Dan* a must-have game.

THIS MONTH IN…

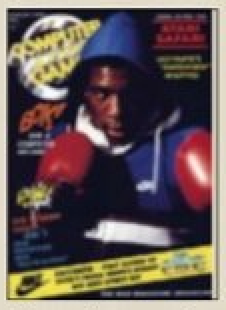
CRASH



Crash looked at Mikro-Gen's new game, *Shadow Of The Unicorn* which came complete with an interface, the Mikro-Plus, giving the Spectrum's memory a boost to 64K. The RPG adventure had a huge gaming area in which you controlled ten different characters and despite being enjoyable to play, it sold poorly.



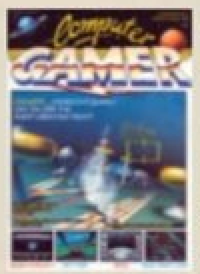
COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES



C&VG interviewed the virtual TV presenter, Max Headroom (or Matt Frewer with make-up). The quick witted, stuttering egomaniac answered *C&VG*'s slightly pompous question, "Do you exist in your own time and space?" with "Do you mean I share a flat? No."



COMPUTER GAMER



Computer Gamer looked at the latest coin-ops hitting the UK's arcades and two of the biggest came from Atari. They had the newspaper lobbing *Paperboy* and the innovative *Marble Madness*. Both were excellent games and as such spawned a multitude of lucrative home computer conversions.



CHARTS

AUGUST 1985



AMSTRAD

1 Dun Darach (Gargoyle Games)

2 Beach Head (US Gold)

3 Red Moon (Level 9)

4 Alien 8 (Ultimate)

5 Knightlore (Ultimate)



SPECTRUM

1 Frank Bruno's Boxing (Elite)

2 Hyper Sports (Imagine)

3 Jet Set Willy 2 (Software Projects)

4 Spy Vs Spy (Beyond)

5 Glass (Quicksilva)



COMMODORE 64

1 The Way Of The Exploding Fist (Melbourne House)

2 Elite (Firebird)

3 Hyper Sports (Imagine)

4 Frankie Goes To Hollywood (Ocean)

5 Tour De France (Activision)

MUSIC

1 Into The Groove (Madonna)

2 We Don't Need Another Hero (Tina Turner)

3 Money For Nothing (Dire Straits)

4 There Must Be An Angel (Eurythmics)

5 I Got You Babe (UB40 & Chrissie Hynde)



BACK TO THE NINETIES CHARTS

SEPTEMBER 1995

ATARI JAGUAR	
1	Iron Soldier (Atari)
2	Hoverstrike (Atari)
3	Doom (Atari)
4	Theme Park (Atari)
5	Alien Vs Predator (Atari)





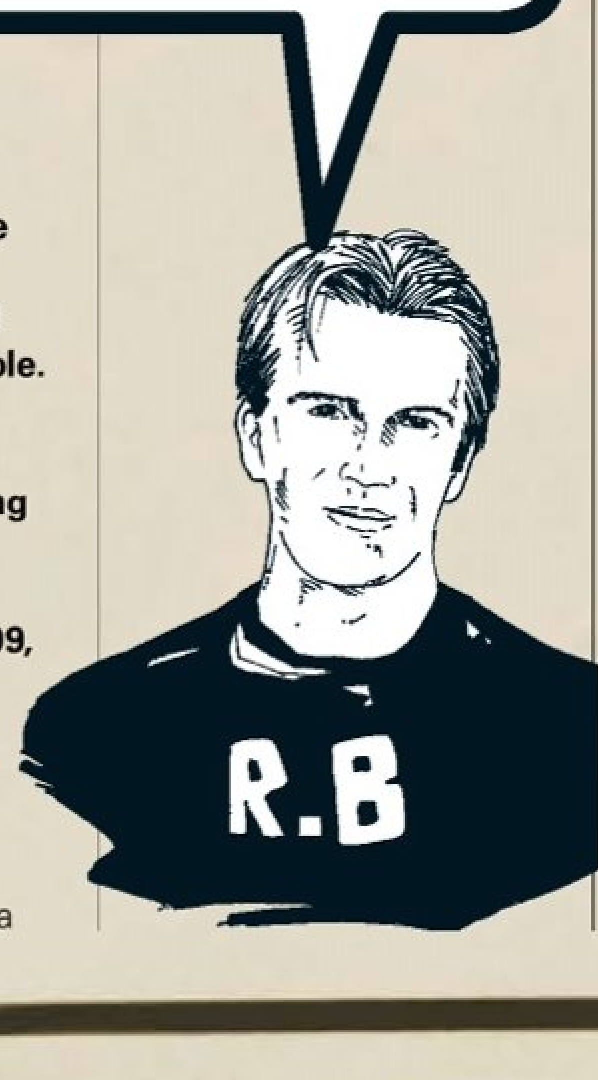
» [SNES] *Batman Forever* was a big game based on a big movie. Sadly both were rubbish.



» Sony's eagerly awaited box of gaming loveliness is officially released in the UK.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM SEPTEMBER 1995

SEPTEMBER 1995 – PlayStation comes to Europe, Jaguar goes retro, there's more Doom for iD, Sega can't Hang On while Batman Forever can't get any worse. Richard Burton mops away tears of sadness with a pristine copy of Detective Comics #27…



It was finally here. After a long drawn-out history beginning in 1986 as the ill-fated CD ROM drive component of a proposed Super Nintendo CD console, Sony released their long awaited PlayStation console. After all the hyperbolic marketing shenanigans, the tit for tat bickering with Nintendo, the tit for tat bickering with Sega and their newly released Saturn, and the continual price changing which finally settled at £299, released on 29 September across Europe. It also debuted in America on 9 September. Hopes were high for it to be good…

It *was* good and for a gauge of just how good, and how well it was selling, a flying visit to Japan would reveal that it had surpassed one million unit sales since its own official Japanese launch in December 94. That in itself was impressive.

Should you have enough of the folding stuff after your initial console outlay to buy an additional game from the launch title list then your choice would've been from *Ridge Racer, Battle Arena Toshinden, 3D Lemmings, Rapid Reload* and the magnificent futuristic anti-gravity racing game *WipEout*.

The 32-bit era of console gaming looked a hard one to call. Sega's Saturn was first out of the blocks, taking an early lead in sales helped with some terrific games. With the introduction of the PlayStation at £100 less, that would certainly mix things up when it came to the Christmas sales period, particularly when the parents are holding the purse strings.

Another competitor to the Saturn and PlayStation was Atari's Jaguar. Despite being a powerful and attractive alternative option, it was left lagging behind due to its poor third-party software support. Generally, the quality of the games was never in doubt, there just weren't enough of them.

Atari was keeping the Jaguar software releases trickling by releasing two new games itself, both of which had a decidedly retro slant. Jeff Minter once again unleashed his magical programming fingers and produced *Defender 2000*. The hairy Yakster had quite an act to follow after creating the mind-blowingly good *Tempest 2000* and thankfully *Defender 2000* was more than adequate.



» [Atari Jaguar] Defender updated for a new generation by the Hairy Yakster Jeff Minter. The magic was still there.

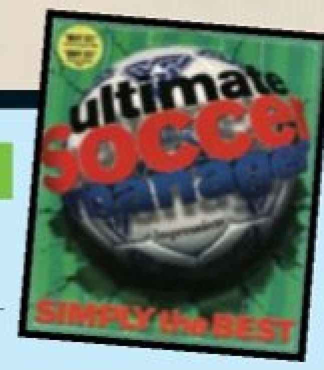
The fast-flowing crisply-defined graphics, a precise control system and shooting aplenty, *Defender 2000* would keep the old school *Defender* heads happy as well as the newer converts. The additions of *Defender Plus* and the classic *Defender* ensured that everyone was happy with Minter's rendition of the arcade classic.

Atari also had *Breakout 2000*, a continuation of the 2000 retro gaming series. Sadly, there was no Yak involvement with this title and it kind of showed. The re-energising of the classic bat, ball and wall game saw simultaneous two-player options

3DO	
1	Wing Commander 3 (Electronic Arts)
2	Slam 'N' Jam 95 (Crystal Dynamics)
3	Syndicate (Electronic Arts)
4	Hell (Gametek)
5	Return Fire (Prolific)



AMIGA	
1	Ultimate Soccer Manager (Daze)
2	Sensible World Of Soccer (Virgin)
3	Manchester United (Krisalis)
4	Colonization (MicroProse)
5	Super Skidmarks (Guildhall)



MUSIC	
1	You Are Not Alone (Michael Jackson)
2	Boombastic (Shaggy)
3	I'll Be There For You (Rembrandts)
4	Stayin' Alive (N-Trance Ft. Ricardo Da Force)
5	Country House (Blur)



SEPTEMBER 1995 NEWS

September was the month that a new media format was announced. Invented and developed by several companies; Sony, Philips, Toshiba and Panasonic, the Digital Versatile Disc or DVD was born. The new format could hold over 4GB of data on a single-sided, single-layered disc which was more than six times that of a Compact Disc.

Early September also saw the creation of one of the internet's most popular websites, the auction site eBay. Founded by programmer Pierre Omidyar, originally as AuctionWeb, it changed its name two years later to the more familiar-sounding eBay. Several listing fees later and eBay had become a multi-billion dollar company employing over 27,000 staff worldwide and a great resource for picking up that elusive copy of *Make A Chip*…



14 September saw the debut of the sports based comedy panel TV show *They Think It's All Over*. It was hosted by Nick Hancock with regular team captains David Gower and Gary Lineker alongside comedic panellists Lee Hurst and Rory McGrath. The irreverent tone was epitomised by the blindfolded touchy feely round of Feel The Sportsman.

9 September saw the debut of Kids' WB channel, the children's TV division of Warner Bros. On its first day of broadcast it brought us some of the finest cartoons of the day, also making their first appearances, such as *Earthworm Jim* and *Freakazoid*. *Pinky And The Brain* was also a channel debutant with its own programme, although they had appeared previously in another Warner Bros cartoon, *Animaniacs*. Groovy!

added with power-ups and colourful and spangly graphics all showcased in a three-quarter 3D perspective view.

While *Breakout 2000* wasn't about to blow your socks off with originality or edge-of-the-seat gaming thrills, what it did do was update the original game just enough to pique your curiosity (the original game was also included on the cartridge) but it failed in capturing the love of the original. It was an okay suite of retro-tinted gaming but wouldn't get your joystick throbbing in the *Defender* or *Tempest* fashion.

JagLink was released this month which would allow you to connect two Jaguar consoles together for a full on two player bloodbath for the excellent Jag version of *Doom*. It was yours for a mere £29.99. So what's better than a blood-soaked copy of *Doom*? *Ultimate Doom*, that's what…

iD Software had decided to release an expanded edition of their original DOS version of *Doom* with the added loveliness of a brand new fourth nine-level episode. For those who had already bought and registered an earlier version, iD provided a free upgrade patch.

Delphine Software, the team responsible for the hugely playable multi-format hit *Flashback*, gave us some news of the sequel. *Fade To Black* saw you once again take control of Conrad Hart on another set of missions against his old foe the Morphs. In a departure from the original game, the graphical style of *Fade To Black* was to be more akin to *Tomb Raider* with its 3D polygonal graphics than the *Prince of Persia* style of *Flashback*.

While undeniably a good game in its own right, *Fade To Black* couldn't capture the excitement that *Flashback* had. The new graphics lent themselves to a more considered thoughtful game rather than the free-flowing platform rush of old. Maybe the game had strayed a little too far from the *Flashback* formula everyone seemed to love. *Fade To Black* was only released on PlayStation and PC with proposed conversions for Sega Saturn and Ultra/Nintendo 64 shelved.

A retro classic was making a welcome return with a 3D version of *Hang-On* under development for the Saturn. Titled *Hang-On GP '95*, it would be the first game in the franchise to attempt a 3D perspective. The graphics were suitably lovely with ultra-reactive controls and challenging gameplay. However, the tracks were monotonous and uninspiring and the motorbike engine effects grated on the ear sounding more like a bumblebee stuck in a milk bottle than a super bike. *Hang-On GP '95* was adequate but unfortunately nothing more than that.

A recent movie release making the videogame switch to the Mega Drive and SNES was *Batman Forever*. Starring Val Kilmer as Batman and Jim Carrey as the Riddler, the movie was forgettable. The game wasn't much better, despite the motion-captured sprites Acclaim hoped would give the game a more lifelike and more realistically animated feel. Sadly, *Batman Forever* was a bog standard scrolling platform game interspersed with a spot of fisticuffs. Holy pile of steaming crud-filled pixels, Batman!



» [PC] *Fade To Black* split opinion after the style of the game shifted to a 3D action adventure from its platform origins.



» [PC] There's *Doom* and then there's *Ultimate Doom*. Essentially the same with an extra nine-level episode.

THIS MONTH IN…

SUPERPLAY



Superplay highlighted a new *Zelda* game which only the most faithful of Nintendo followers could play. It was an enhanced version of the original Famicom Disk release, was only available in Japan and could only be played via Nintendo's Satellaview, a satellite modem for the SNES. Good luck with that…



MEAN MACHINES SEGA



With the Sega Saturn in the shops and selling steadily, it was only a matter of time before the add-ons started appearing. *Mean Machines* picked out a few for closer inspection including light-guns designed by Sega's own AM2 department, a six player multi-tap and an MPG adaptor for watching VCDs.

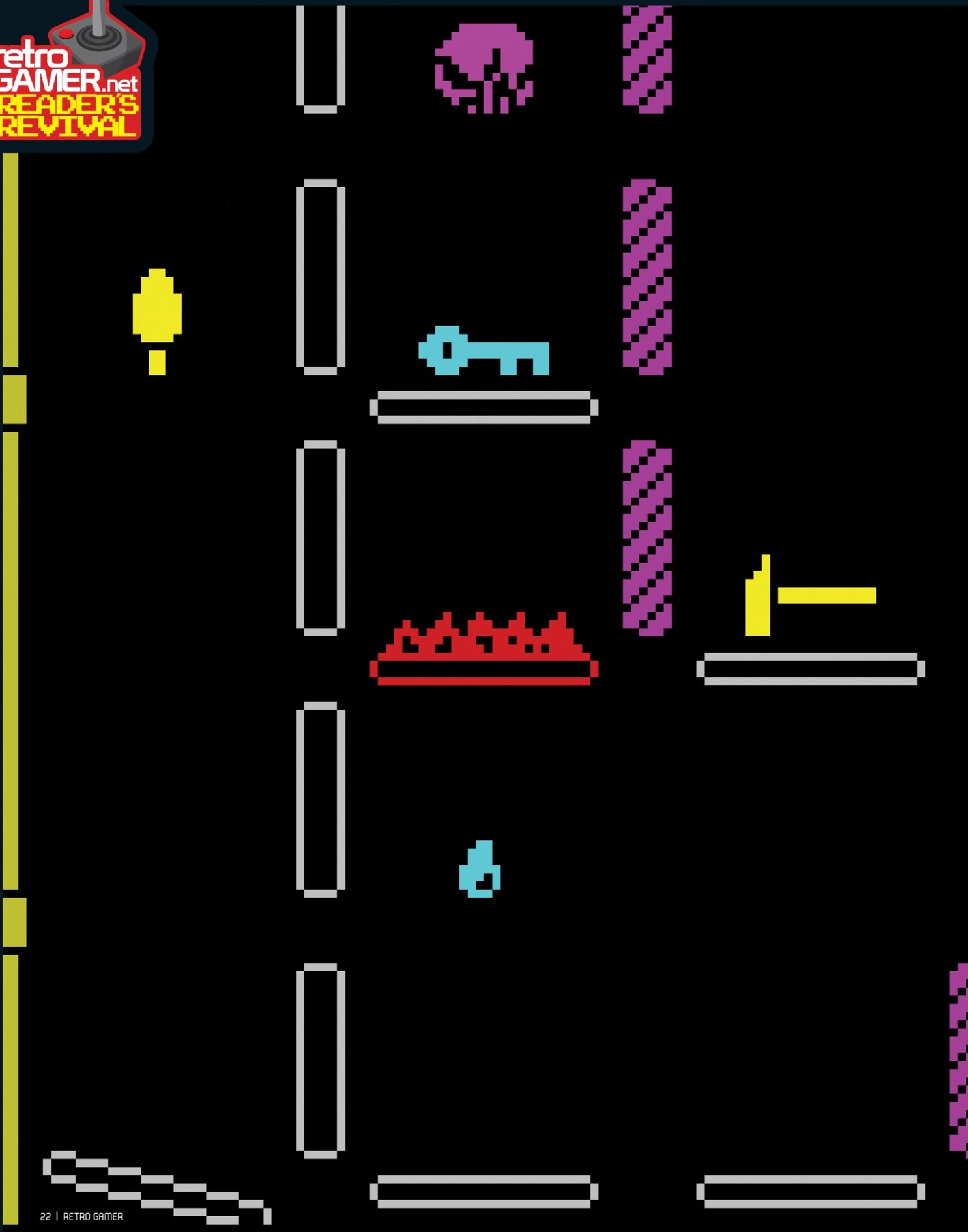


COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES



C&VG stated "nothing has impressed us more than Namco's *Tekken*" as it almost imploded with news that Namco were developing a *Tekken* coin-op sequel. Two well illustrated *Tekken*-filled pages later and Sega's *Virtua Fighter 2* is previewed with the tagline, "the greatest fighting game ever". Gah!





Bumpy

THE FRENCH SHOW US HOW TO BUMP AND GRIND

#56



» ZX SPECTRUM
» LORICIELS
» 1989

The Spectrum wasn't exactly renowned for puzzle games. One of the only games within the genre that I remember playing as a child was *Bumpy*, a little gem from French developers Loriciel. Time has eroded my memory, but I believe I got the game from a *Your Sinclair* covertape.

I remembered about this game a few years ago, and went on a hunt to find it, but to no avail. As it turns out, I remembered the name of the game as *Bouncy*, rather than *Bumpy*. Seeing as the little guy bounces all over the place, I think my name is better.

You controlled a small white ball, and your aim was to collect enough items on each level to get the exit to open. There were no sentient enemies as such (at least not in the early part of the game!), but hazards did get in your way, such as fire and falling off the bottom of the screen. It was also possible to get stuck in an infinite loop of bouncing if you bounced onto a sloped platform which was facing an oppositely sloped platform!

You moved left and right, and had a bounce move to ascend to varying heights. Some of the items you collected enabled you to perform certain actions – collecting hammers enabled you to break certain walls and collecting water drops enabled you to put out the aforementioned fire hazards. The biggest obstacles by far are the platforms, which get smaller each time you bounce on them, until they disappear completely. This meant you had to plan your moves in advance, or you'd get stuck. Infuriating if you only had a couple of items left, or, worse yet, just opened the exit on the other side of the level!

I never got very far into the game as it got very hard, very quickly, but I loved what I did play.

The Lord of Midnight



1951-2012

Mike Singleton was a gaming legend who sadly passed away in October, aged just 61. His friend and co-worker Chris Wild looks back at Mike's rich and lasting legacy



Mike Singleton's Skype status reads, "You know you're getting old when you remember historical events not because you studied them, but because you were alive at the time."

I can't think of any more of an apt statement for a person who was not only there at the beginning of the British gaming industry, but who also helped define its direction, not to mention the direction of gaming in general.

Born February 1951 in Blackpool, Mike moved to the Wirral shortly after his fitting winter birth, with his father Walter Singleton, a chef in the forces, and his mother Minnie. He would live there for the next 40 years.

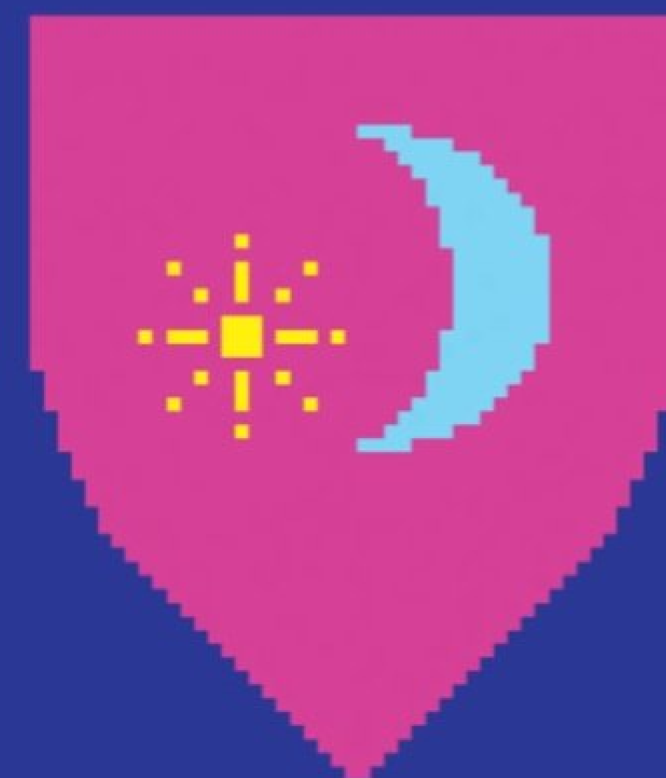
Educated at Wallasey Grammar, Mike passed eight O-levels at the age of 15 and then studied maths, physics, chemistry, and general studies at A-level. At 17 he attended Lancaster University studying theoretical physics. However, after the first year turned out to be largely a re-run of A-level physics, he switched to English Literature in which he gained his degree aged 21.

Mike came to computers late by modern standards. After receiving a Sinclair programmable calculator for his 27th birthday, he wrote a program to calculate the complicated Around The Clock betting for a friend's betting shop. He then taught himself BASIC on a Commodore Pet to develop a full system for the shop, including all the office work and automating all aspects of betting.

Unfortunately, tests of the system highlighted that it couldn't cope with the last minute rush of punters placing their bets. In 1979, convinced of the potential to make money from software, he conceived a betting race simulator, *Computer Race* that would allow the punters to bet on the outcome of the simulator. Unfortunately this grand plan was also scuppered when it was ruled that betting on fictional events was against the gaming act.

The experience wasn't without merit though. With access to the Commodore Pet, Mike taught himself Assembler Language and programmed his first commercial game, *Space Ace* for Petsoft in 1980. It wasn't a massive success by modern standards, but it sold an acceptable, for the time, 300 units. Petsoft introduced him to the Sinclair ZX80 with a view to develop on it. This resulted in him being introduced to Sir Clive Sinclair, and being shown the new ZX81. Out of this meeting came *Games Pack 1.* A series of small games that Mike wrote over a two-week holiday period. *Games Pack 1* sold around one hundred thousand units.

Mike was still working as an English teacher at Sutton High School, Mill Lane, Ellesmere Port, but had also graduated to teaching the new emerging computer



studies during Computer Club, where he took the opportunity of showing the students his new creations, and giving them the chance to play them. *Shadowfax, Siege, Snakepit*, and *3-Deep Space* followed, all arcade styles games that were developed across a number of devices.

3-Deep Space would be the start of Mike pushing the envelope. What was revolutionary about this game, and completely bonkers when you consider the limitations of the Eighties machines, was that the game shipped with special 3D glasses. Yes, re-read that statement and consider the implications of stereoscopic vision, back in 1983, a technique that we ▶





mike singleton softography

space ace
Year: 1980

games pack 1
Year: 1981

shadowfax
Year: 1983

siege
Year: 1983

snake pit
Year: 1983

starlord [pbm]
Year: 1984

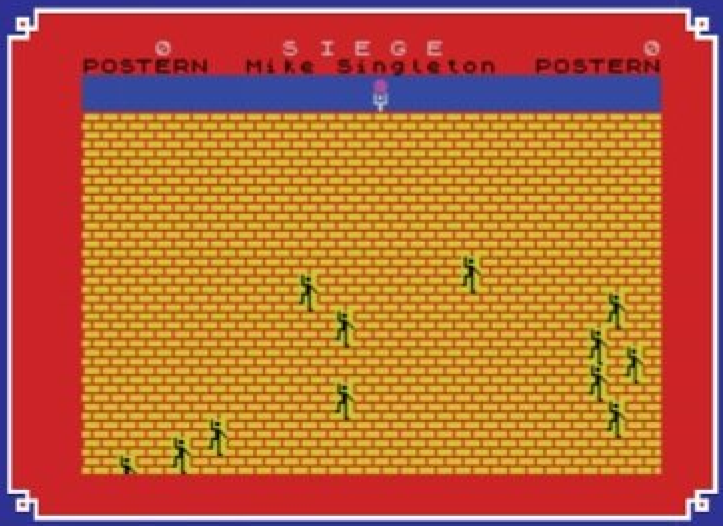
the lords of midnight
Year: 1984

doomdark's revenge
Year: 1985

quake minus one
Year: 1985

are only just now seeing come to fruition. To be fair, as Mike would tell Roger Keane, "It was a bit of a flop, I must admit. It worked on the BBC and Postern insisted on it being done on the Spectrum, Commodore 64, and Vic-20 if possible. And it was just about possible if you fiddled around with the telly enough and had A1 vision."

Mike used some of his profits from *Games Pack 1* to run Play-By-Mail games. *Star Lord* was one of the earliest if not the first PBM games in the UK. The profits from *Star Lord* and previous games meant that Mike was able to change his career from that of an English teacher to a game developer, and in 1982, although now raising his boys as a single parent, he left his teaching post to embark on his own adventure…



[Spectrum] *Siege* gave little indication to the epic scope of Mike's later games…

the lords of midnight

Mike was approached to write an article on PBMs by Terry Pratt, the editor of *Computer & Video Games* magazine. *Seventh Empire*, the game he wrote for them, ran for over a year. *Computer & Video Games* would later publish Mike's spy-themed board game, *Treachery*. The game was controlled by a type-in computer listing and marked the first appearance of Mike's keyboard overlay.

In 1983 when Terry Pratt was establishing Beyond Games, a publisher that would sit inside the EMAP family, he turned to Mike to see if he would be interested in getting involved, and in September they met in Chester and discussed some ideas that Mike had been contemplating. Mike told me of that meeting, "The outcome of our discussion was that I would first implement the technique and then, providing it worked, we'd go ahead with the full game – which I wanted to call the *Lords Of Atlantis*. Fortunately for everyone, Terry wasn't particularly fond of the title and asked me to think of something else. After a month or so of somewhat less than flat-out experimentation, there was sufficient [enough game] to show as a proof of concept and I signed a contract with Beyond. And thus *The Lords Of Midnight* was born."

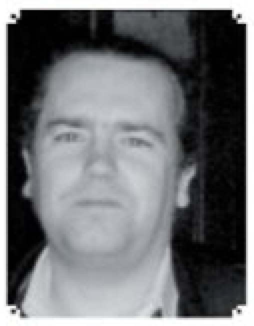
[Spectrum] *The Lord Of The Rings* had a big influence on Mike's early games. This is another notable offering called *Shadowfax*.



Terry speaks fondly of Mike. "Mike Singleton was one of the most inspiringly creative people I've worked with. He never ran short of ideas and bouncing them back and forth over a swift half in either



Jon Hare
Sensible Software



"Mike, along with a number of others, was one of the founders of early British games development, I hope as time passes his pioneering work will continue to be remembered and respected."

London or the Wirral in the early Eighties was way more enjoyable than work had any right to be. Mike pushed the early games computers further than the rest of us expected them to go. My marketing skills didn't always complement Mike's programming and the teaser ad for his *The Lords Of Midnight* game was so illegible that colleagues came up to ask: 'Okay, who are The Lords Of Mnwerff?' Luckily Mike's talent was too evident to be hampered by my efforts and *TLOM* went on to top the sales charts. Although we only worked closely for a couple of years, Mike was as much a friend as a game developer and his involvement was a key reason why I launched Beyond Software."

What seems remarkable about this pivotal moment in games history, is that not only was the resulting game delivered in a particularly short period of time, being released in July 1984, but also that nothing in Mike Singleton's softography up to this point, hinted at what would follow.

The release of *The Lords Of Midnight* heralded the birth of what Beyond Games marketed as the 'Epic' game. Not only was it a game of seemingly enormous proportions, boasting '4000 locations and 32000 panoramic views', but it had open gameplay, allowing the player to free roam around the world of Midnight, it allowed the player to decide if they wanted to complete the game through quest or strategic military conquest. And to help the player, Mike provided them with a novella that told *The Lords Of Midnight*'s rich backstory. With one release, Mike was able to bring together literature and games, and create a believable world that could be compared to the likes of Narnia and Middle-earth.

TLOM was a huge success and was quickly followed by *Doomdark's Revenge*. Mike refined the technology, finding new ways to squeeze memory usage, allowing him to increase the size of the sequel. *Revenge* suffered from 'Second Album Syndrome'. Mike needed to follow up the massively successful and critically acclaimed *TLOM*, but had no time to do it. The drive to make it bigger meant that the memory-reducing technology that Mike deployed resulted in the game's loss of character. The map of Midnight he had lovingly hand drawn with the aid of his sons Jules and Tam, was replaced by a generated one. The character and place names were no longer names that Mike had spent time agonising over, but instead were constructs of a word-combining algorithm. Mike would tell me later, that he regretted not putting the same amount of effort into the map and the names.

In an interview with Sinclair User in 1984, after the release of *TLOM* and before *Revenge*, Mike revealed: "It's a nice idea to own your own company, but it might restrict my programming time, which would not be particularly appealing. The days of backroom companies are over. Perhaps if you had a set up with administrators you can trust." Mike saw himself more as a games designer than a programmer, and continued, "What would really suit me is to get a team of programmers and just feed them ideas. Terry had a position in mind for me at Beyond, but I think I make more money on the outside."

Mike had been the epitome of the back-bedroom coder. He did virtually everything except glue the box together – game design, story and manual writing, programming, graphics on his Grafpad tablet, sound effects, music, publicity. However, *Doomdark's Revenge* would be the last published game that Mike would develop on his own.

Dark Sceptre
Year: 1987

Throne Of Fire
Year: 1987

Star Trek: The Rebel Universe
Year: 1987

Whirligig
Year: 1988

War In Middle Earth
Year: 1988

Midwinter
Year: 1989

Midwinter II: Flames Of Freedom
Year: 1990

Grimblood
Year: 1990

Ashes Of Empire
Year: 1992

» [Spectrum] *Dark Sceptre* remains an astonishing looking game and a mighty technical achievement for the humble Spectrum.



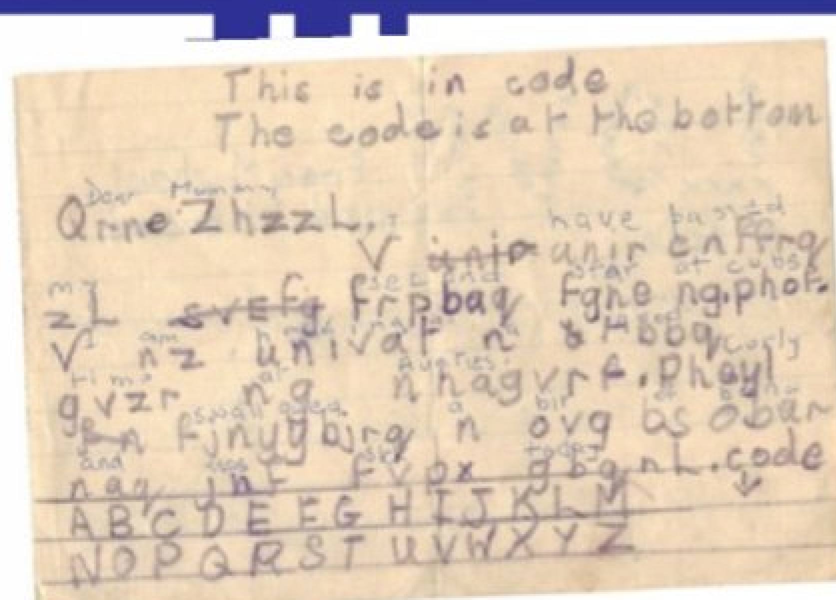
Dark Sceptre

Beyond were now in demand, and Paramount offered them the *Star Trek* licence, which Mike would be heavily ▶

Andrew Oliver
Blitz Games Studios

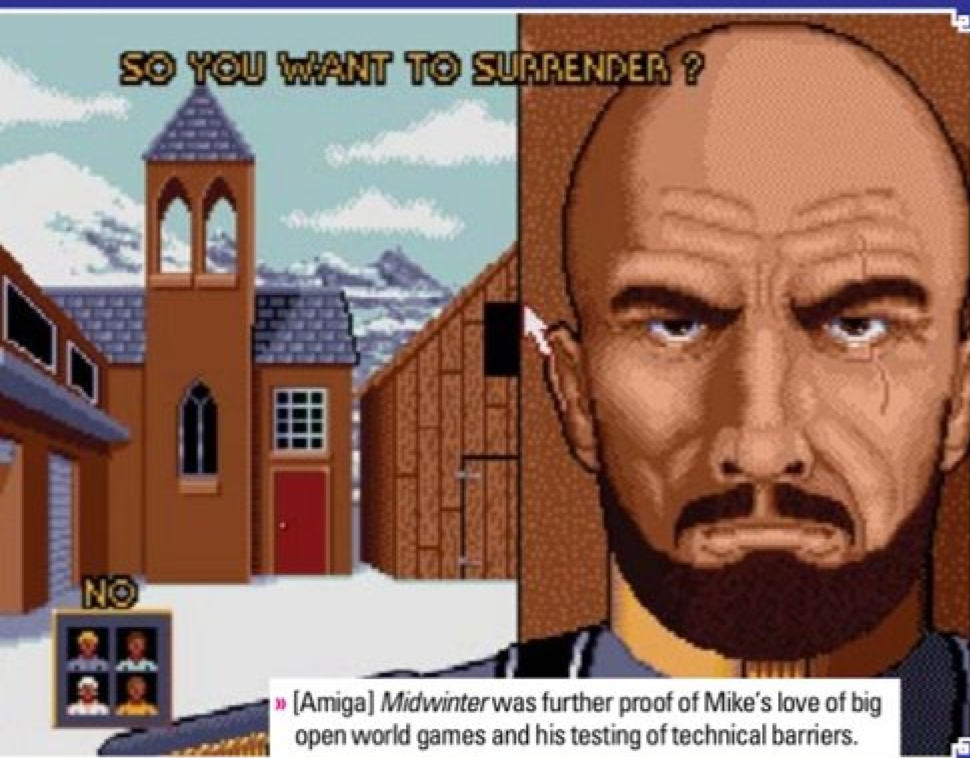


"Although I didn't personally know Mike Singleton, I do remember him from my childhood. I used to see his name displayed on a great game that I love, *The Lords Of Midnight*. It's people like Mike that helped establish the British games industry. As the industry is growing up, we'll see stories like this more and more. It's very sad."



» At age seven, while staying with his aunt, Mike gave a glimpse of where his problem-solving mind lay. In a short letter sent from son to mother, he wrote this letter using a cipher, and provided the means to decode it.

Mike had been the epitome of the back bedroom coder. He did virtually everything except glue the box together



» [Amiga] *Midwinter* was further proof of Mike's love of big open world games and his testing of technical barriers.

Starfighter Ace
Year: Unknown

Starlord
Year: 1993

The Ring Cycle
Year: 1995

Red Ghost
Year: 1995

The Lords Of Midnight: The Citadel
Year: 1995

Submariner
Year: Unreleased

Powerslide
Year: 1998

▶ involved with. But he was also already working on several projects, including ideas for the third part of the *Midnight* trilogy, *Eye Of The Moon*, his new PBM game and Spectrum title *Dark Sceptre*, and the C64 title *Quake Minus One* in conjunction Warren Foulkes, his collaborator on his previous PBM *Star Lord*. To alleviate the scheduling problem, Mike met with Dave Kelly, the MD of a local software development company, Consult Software, to see if they could help with the work on *Dark Sceptre*.

Dave recalls that meeting vividly, "Mike lived in New Brighton, about a two-minute walk from my home, which was a surprise to me. Mike was the Elvis Presley and The Beatles of the games industry, and he lived just down the road! We were writing software that would make designing kitchens easier and had no intentions of getting into game development. We worked out a contract, and a deadline, and spent some really memorable weeks going over the gameplay, program specification, music and art that would go into the game. We also had mock sword fights in Mike's backyard so that we could get the in-game fighting correct."



"I remember a particular meeting with Mike in my office. He'd just turned up, as he was inclined to do, and asked me how to go about creating a development company like Consult. He wanted to start his company, and it was from this meeting that Maelstrom Games was born."

Dark Sceptre would be Mike's first release after the hugely successful *Midnight* games, and it was important to him that it felt right. He kept refining the game design, which had the knock-on effect that its goal posts kept moving. He was trying to balance the work for the PBM game with the more limited Spectrum version, but *Dark Sceptre* slipped further and further behind. This would be the start of a period of delayed projects.

After *Dark Sceptre*, Consult signed with Melbourne House for another game that would carry Mike's name. *Throne Of Fire* would be designed by Mike but would be completely developed by Consult.

Dark Sceptre was originally intended as a 1986 Beyond game, but was finally released to critical acclaim by Maelstrom through Firebird at the end of 1987. The visuals included colourful backgrounds and large characters with the signature black outline technique for avoiding the Spectrum's trademark colour-clash problem. It also pushed a four-channel sound technique previously unheard on the poor audio of the Spectrum. All this, combined with a deep and detailed game design and a Mike Singleton back story, guaranteed success.

The following years would see Mike and Maelstrom produce *Star Trek*, the technically impressive but very different *Whirligig*, and *War In Middle Earth*. It's difficult to not look at these games as anything but transitions into the 16-bit era. Like the games that had debuted before *The Lords Of Midnight*, these games didn't really hint at what was to come…

Midwinter

In 1989 Mike released what would turn out to be possibly his most groundbreaking game. *Midwinter* pushed boundaries, thanks to Mike exploring what was possible with the new 16-bit machines. It would have been easy for Mike to simply revisit *The Lords Of Midnight*, but instead he took many of the concepts that he'd started, and re-examined what they meant, finding new ways to explore gameplay.

Set in a post-apocalyptic world of 2099, you controlled Captain John Stark in this first-person action strategy game set on the bleak Isle of Midwinter. You could ski, use a snowmobile and fly a hang-glider. The world was represented in a snow-covered voxel landscape, and the gameplay had everything you would expect from a Singleton game. Characters to recruit, timer-controlled turn-based gameplay, an immersive backstory, open world adventure with almost total freedom, and the ability for the player to lose themselves inside a carefully crafted fictional world.

In *Midwinter*, it's easy to see some of the concepts that were introduced in the *Midnight* games. The characters had more personality, histories of their own, defined traits and personal relationships that needed to be considered against other characters that you would recruit into your campaign. John Kennedy of *Amiga Power* would proclaim in his review, "*Midwinter* is an important advent in computer programming. The Mike Singleton crowd have always produced innovative products, but this time they have surpassed themselves. Never has so much effort been spent on creating a new environment. It's not a game, it's a virtual reality. Be there."

Flames Of Freedom was released the following year, and would prove to be *Midwinter*'s *Doomdark's Revenge*; a sequel that was a technical advancement of all that came before, but just lacked some of the originally and spark that made Midwinter such a classic.

Ashes Of Empire

In 1992, Mike developed *Ashes Of Empire* for Mirage. A game inspired by the breakdown of the Soviet empire. *Ashes* follows the *Midwinter* games technically, although the techniques used had been refined and built upon, it therefore isn't necessarily as groundbreaking as those that came before it. Where it does break new ground, is the sheer depth of ▶



We had mock sword fights in Mike's backyard so we could get the in-game fighting correct



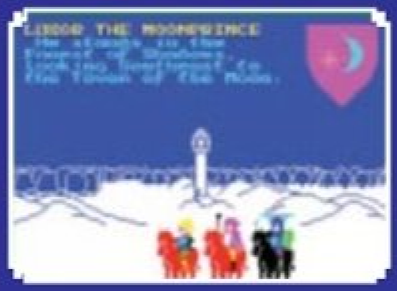
» [Spectrum] *Throne Of Fire* was another epic offering from Mike and was released in 1987.

the influence of

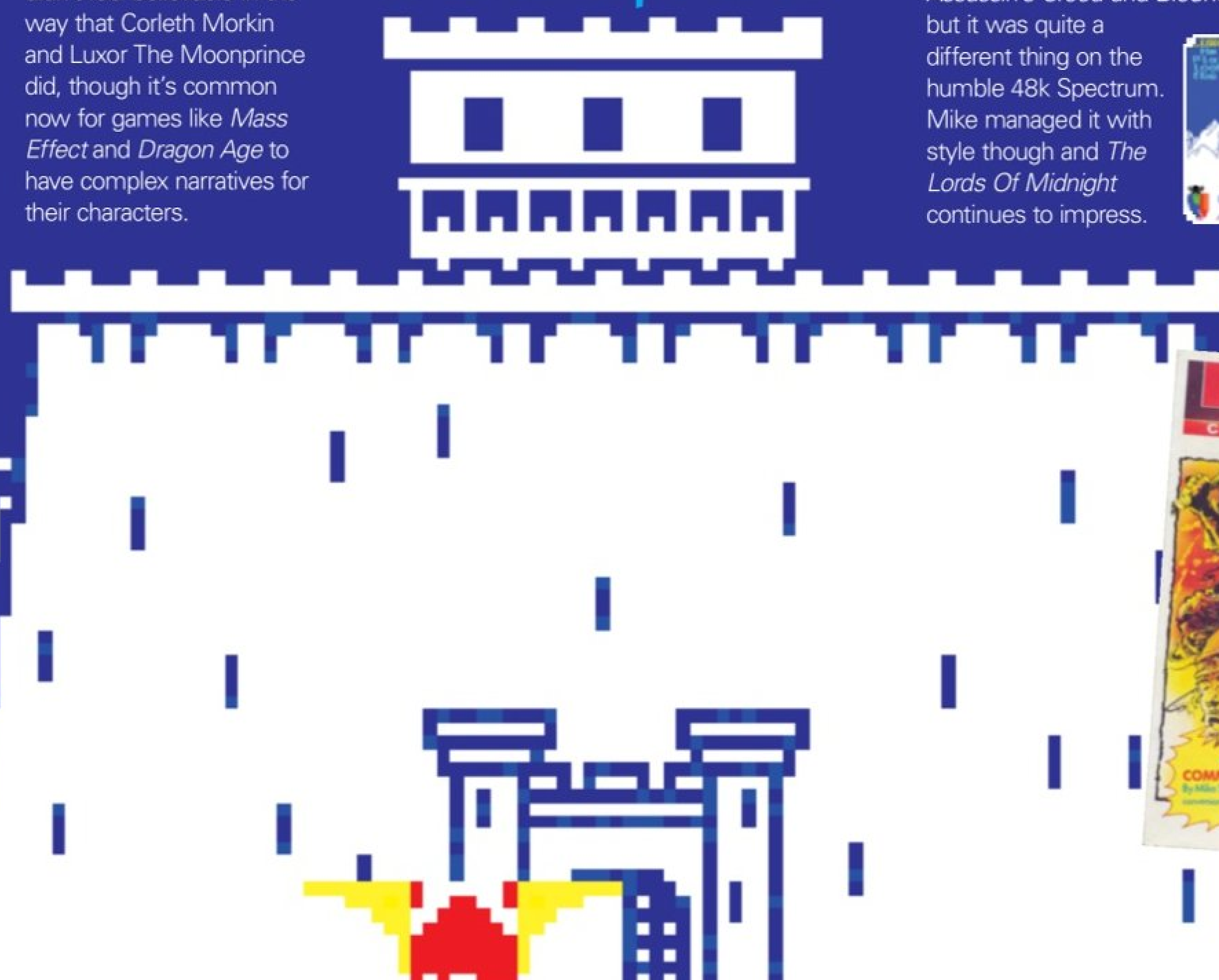
the lords of midnight

why mike singleton's spectrum classic was so important

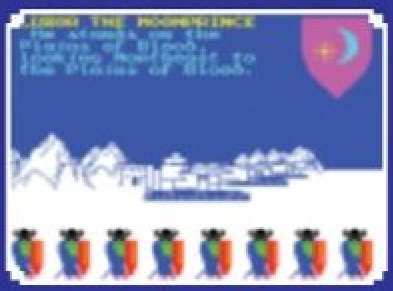
Alternate play conditions
The Lords Of Midnight was one of the first home games to give you several different ways of finishing the game. Nowadays it's a common thing, especially in strategy games like *Disgaea* and *Final Fantasy Tactics*, but back in 1984 it felt like a breath of fresh air.



Realistic characters
While game characters appeared long before Mike Singleton's game, they didn't feel believable in the way that Corleth Morkin and Luxor The Moonprince did, though it's common now for games like *Mass Effect* and *Dragon Age* to have complex narratives for their characters.



A believable world
Freelancer Andrew Fisher recently said the following about Mike: "He didn't create games, he created worlds." Of course, creating believable worlds is common in today's games, with *GTA*, *Assassin's Creed* and *BioShock* all impressing, but it was quite a different thing on the humble 48k Spectrum. Mike managed it with style though and *The Lords Of Midnight* continues to impress.





■ *The Lords Of Midnight* cover art was amazing, promising great adventure.



Pushing technical boundaries
Many games rarely exist until the technology is created to actually sustain them. Games like *Red Dead Redemption* wouldn't have worked on PS2, and it's hard to imagine that *The Lords Of Midnight* would have had the same impact if Mike's 'Landscaping' technique hadn't been powering it.



The whole package
While *The Lords Of Midnight* didn't always do everything first, few other games of the time were doing everything it did at the same time, and doing it so well. It may have cost a hefty £9.95, but the quality was there for all to see.

Going beyond the call of duty
Beyond Software initially offered to turn the campaign of the first person who completed *The Lords Of Midnight* into a novel. When no publisher stepped forward, Mike offered to write the book himself. It's hard to imagine such a selfless gesture in today's industry.



Continue?
With *The Lords Of Midnight*, Mike created a world that evolved with *Doomdark's Revenge* and the unreleased *Eye Of The Moon*.

Presentation
The Lords Of Midnight was one of the first 'big' games. As a result it had lavish contents, including a map drawn by Mike and his sons, a huge novella, a keyboard overlay and a lavish box with big yellow cardboard slipcases. Many games have limited editions nowadays, but *The Lords Of Midnight* was one of the first to feel like a proper event.

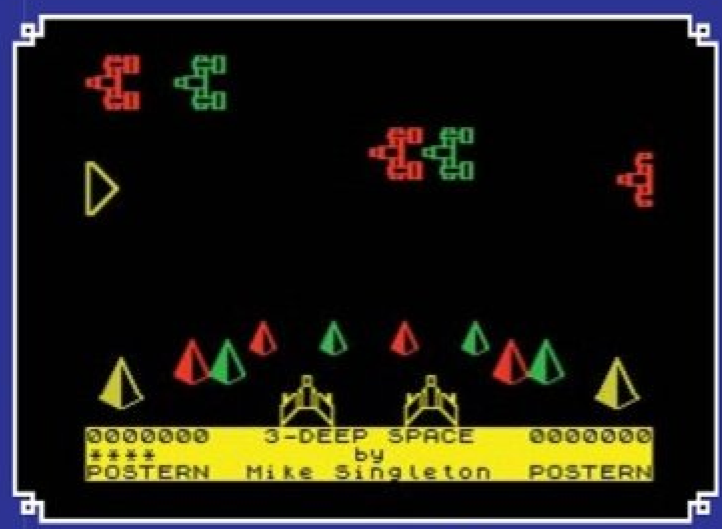
game design and supporting material. Everything inside the game was bigger and more detailed. *Midwinter*'s sparse landscape was replaced with a large, detailed world, the game had thousands of characters to interact with, and Mike pushed the open world concepts that he had previously explored, to the limit, and wrapped it up with a vast, complex story. Richard Longhurst of *Amiga Power* wrote: "If you thought *War And Peace* was a long book, just wait until you see the background material supplied with *Ashes Of Empire*. Every single province, of which there are 40, is described in mind-boggling detail.

"The underlying themes and strategies are inescapably based on real life, which inevitably leads to the conclusion that in *Ashes Of Empire*, Mike Singleton is trying to do more than entertain the game-playing masses. He's trying to educate us."

The Lords Of Midnight: The Citadel

In the Nineties, Mike was given the opportunity to revisit his breakthrough title *The Lords Of Midnight*. Nearly ten years had passed and nearly fifteen titles. Mike was approached by Domark, just as the publisher was transitioning into the powerhouse of publishing that would become Eidos.

Dominic Wheatley, founder of Domark recalls, "I first met Mike in 1990, when he was already known in the games world for *The Lords Of Midnight*. My company was expanding and publishing a range of titles, from coin-op conversations like *Hard Drivin'* to *Championship Manager* to flight sims like *AV8 Harrier*. We approached Mike to publish the next in the series of Midnight. We would go to his offices to see the latest versions, and inevitably ended up in a pub just across the road for long lunches."



With hindsight it's easy to look at *The Citadel* as Mike trying to bring together both *The Lords Of Midnight* and *Midwinter*. He was also pushing technology forward again. Full real-time 3D was still very much in its infancy, and *Quake*, the title that really opened up that area of technology, was still a couple of years away.

Richard Hewison recalls, "I was hired by Domark to write the manual for the third part of *The Lords Of Midnight*. Copious development versions of the game and hours of playtesting resulted in almost 300 comments, suggestions and 'features'. I would upload these reports to the Domark BBS using my Kflex 56k dial-up modem, and then wait for the inevitable phone call from Mike.

"I can remember spending almost two hours on one particular call, where we discussed everything from the elasticity of the 3D to the odd strategies being deployed by the amassing armies across Midnight. Mike was always fair but resolute on his vision for the game and the way the AI and game engine was working. Mike came across as a very knowledgeable man who was very passionate about his strategy games. He was an extremely talented man who loved games and the art of designing strategy games in particular."

Mike said of *The Citadel*, "I wasn't completely satisfied, but I wasn't totally unhappy with it either. Another six months work on it could have made it a lot, lot

Jest
Year: Unreleased

Poolshark
Year: 1999

MTV Skateboarding
Year: 2000

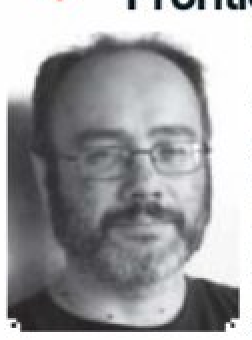
World Championship Snooker
Year: 2001

G-Surfers
Year: 2002

Indiana Jones And The Emperor's Tomb
Year: 2003

Wrath Unleashed
Year: 2004

Chris Pink
Frontier Developments



"I first worked with Mike when I joined Consult. They were working on *Dark Sceptre* and *War in Middle Earth* at the time. Mike was the designer on these games and Consult was doing the programming. Once I left Consult, Mike talked me into joining him at Maelstrom, where I worked with him on completing *Middle Earth* (an RTS-like game), *Whirligig* (a shooter), *Midwinter* (large open world adventure), *StarLord* (based on Mike's older play by mail game) and on a mini game called *The Political Arena* (a digital board game). Years later Peter Moreland at Microprose cornered me, looking for a copy of that minigame because he enjoyed it so much that he simply needed to play it again.

"If you look at Mike's output as a designer over his most active period, you see not only a wealth of ideas covering a multitude of genres but also a keen sense of what the platforms he was working on were capable of, using that information in his designs. *The Lords Of Midnight* is a classic example of this. He also wanted the information presented in his games to feel natural and accessible for a wide audience. A small example of this was when he asked me to replace the banks of numbers I'd programmed for character status in Middle-earth to descriptive (so Frodo was "somewhat tired" rather than at 10/255 with a bar graph next to it). As a programmer, he came up with some very inventive solutions to problems. He always looked to extract every ounce from the systems he was working on.

"Mike was a great teacher. Many of the people he had working for him were new to the industry and he took the time to work with them. I don't ever remember him losing his temper or getting frustrated. He would patiently sit and work to find a way to impart his knowledge to you. It worked well, too, because there are many of the former Maelstrom crew still working games.

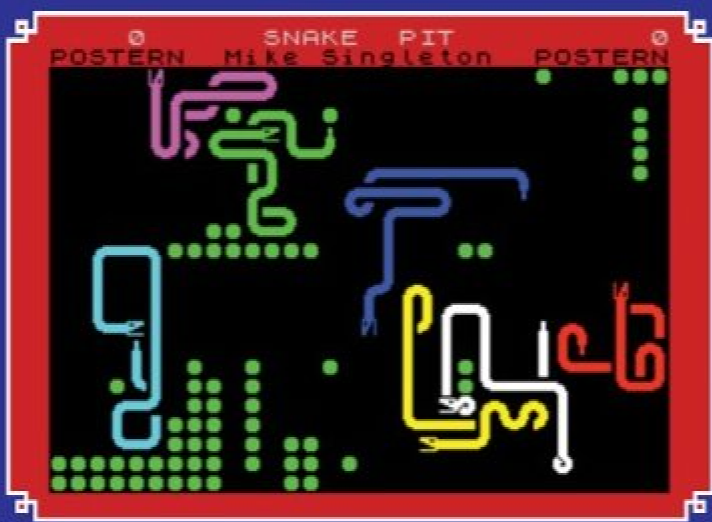
"In his living room, he had copies of his old games displayed across the mantelpiece. It was the first time I'd seen someone display the fruits of their labour. Outside of work, he loved a pint, his children and skiing. He was always looking forward to that next trip up a mountain."

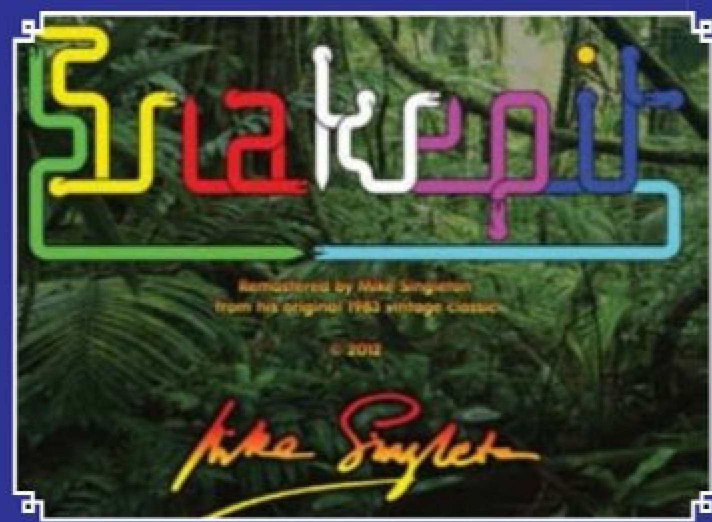
David Braben
Fortier Developments



"Mike made a number of milestone games in the Eighties like *The Lords Of Midnight* and *Midwinter*, but I never got to meet him face to face, other than at a distance at awards ceremonies."

MIKE SINGLETON 1951 - 2012





better, but, at the time, that wasn't feasible. Both the interiors and the exteriors ended up sparsely populated by fewer characters creatures and objects than we had originally intended, and consequently opportunities for real player interaction were diminished."

According to Dominic, "The game came out eventually and did fine. It was perhaps a little too late, and the moment of maximum hype had passed some months before. But the good reputation and the high regard in which Mike was held by his peers and fans never faltered even though he was not a huge self-promoter."

For a man who was fast getting a reputation for shipping his games late, Mike's release schedule was relentless. From his first game in 1980 he shipped, or had a title ready to be shipped, every single year until 1995, and many were multi-platform. In 1987 he shipped both *Dark Sceptre* and *Throne Of Fire*.

The protracted development of *The Citadel*, and its underwhelming results, had left Maelstrom vulnerable, and in a bid to secure a future for his team, Mike sold Maelstrom to Philips Interactive, with the team becoming its in-house development studio, Curved Logic. Development moved to consoles, and Mike found himself once more working on more arcade style games like *Jest*, *Poolshark*, and *Looney Tunes*. Curved Logic was eventually sold to Infogrames.

Mike returned to freelancing around 1998 and embarked on a consulting role for Blade Interactive Studios and Dark Black before working with The Collective Studios in California, helping on titles such as Lucas Arts' *Indiana Jones*, and *Wrath Unleashed*. He fell back more on his programming skills and less on his design work, so it's very easy to look at the next ten years as Mike being a jobbing programmer.

He worked for a number of studios on various projects, but often this work involved very detailed problem solving. Optimising low-level graphics routines or compression techniques. Creating special effects or Camera replay systems. He was able to draw upon over two decades of working on almost every device released.

Mike moved to Switzerland. Partly due to work, but also because he loved skiing, having spent many winter holidays with his two sons, skiing. He told me once, "It was a good job the kids love skiing. We never had many summer holidays as I was always busy preparing for a Christmas release."

Jocelyn Weiss worked with Mike during the last eight years and told us: "I met Mike when he came to Switzerland in 2004 to work on an MMORPG for Komodo. He was interested in the project because of game ideas he had and he knew that it would somehow be the future of PC gaming. It would allow him [to] revisit themes that he explored in some of his early titles."

Mike accepted the role of CTO at new Swiss based startup, Komodo Entertainment Software, and led a small team, of which Jocelyn was a member, building a new system for a new MMORPG. It was something that had recently reawakened in Mike, his interest in big open world type games ▶

OneOnline
Year: Unreleased

Flamebusters
Year: Unreleased

Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows
Year: 2005

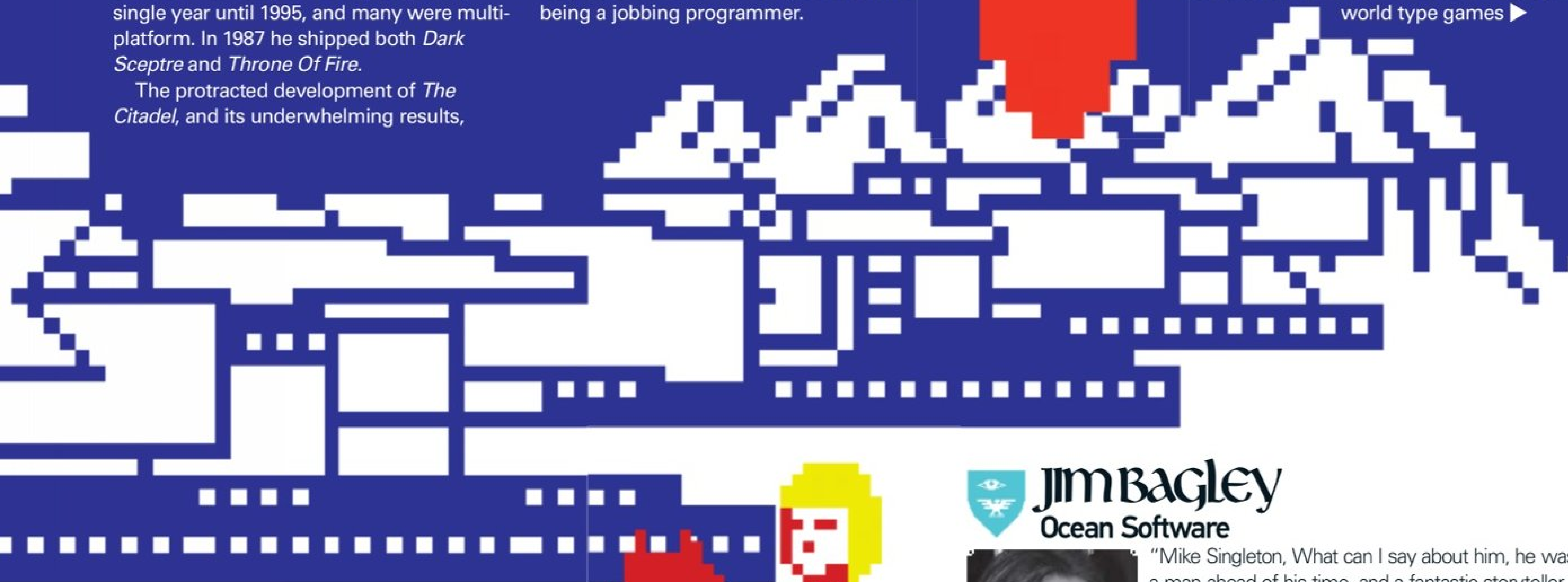
Mortal Kombat: Fire & Ice
Year: Unreleased

Stranglehold
Year: 2007

Race Driver: Grid
Year: 2008

Fighters Uncaged
Year: 2010

The Lords of Midnight (iOS)
21 December 2012





Geoff Crammond
Microprose



"That is very sad news. I remember Mike Singleton to be a very pleasant and helpful guy, and have always respected his creativity and ability to produce original titles."

Jim Bagley
Ocean Software



"Mike Singleton, What can I say about him, he was a man ahead of his time, and a fantastic storyteller to boot. He was always pushing boundaries with his games, making vast worlds not only fit into a 48k spectrum, Some worlds so big, they alone should have used up more than 48k!

I thankfully had the chance to work on one of his game designs, back in the Eighties, for the Spectrum, called *Throne Of Fire*, It was also my first break into the industry, so not only was it a huge privilege, but was also a bit of a mammoth task for a newbie to the industry.

He was always a nice person, very helpful, and always eager to give a helping a hand if you needed it.

I will always cherish working with him, (and the many other legends I've worked with over the years). R.I.P. Mike. Gone, but long may you be remembered!"



[PS2] *Wrath Unleashed* was an interesting strategy game with clever nods to *Archon: The Light And The Dark*.

"The first project called "OneOnline" had three programmers and Mike was our technical director," continues Jocelyn. "Over six months we produced a prototype of the game working online, with some very nice features like spells being researched and cast through voice recognition. Mike did an awesome job working on a huge terrain system that covered all sorts of terrain types and could have caves built in. At the same time he taught me GPU assembly programming and all sorts of things. He became my mentor."

When Komodo ran out of funding, Mike and Jocelyn agreed to create a partnership and work together, primarily as a device for the two developers to work on remote contracts for game studios. So they created Singleton & Weiss Interactive Games in 2006. They worked for Midway in their R&D group, contributing to titles like *Gauntlet*, *Mortal Kombat*, and *Stranglehold*. Later they worked for Codemasters in their R&D group, optimising code on PC, X360 and PS3.

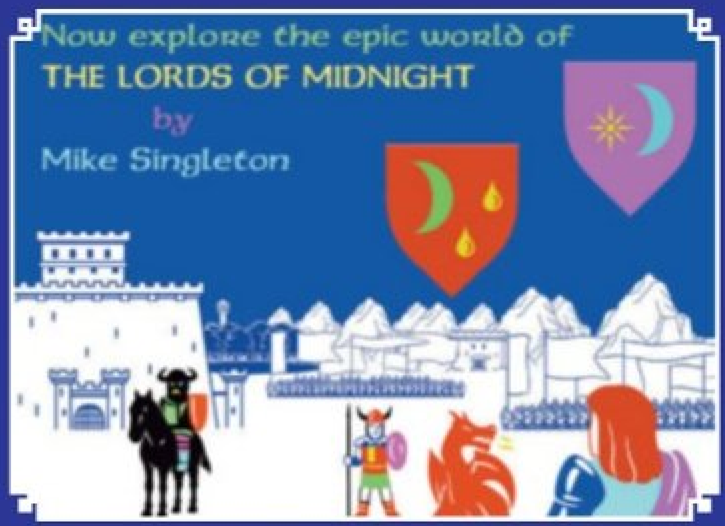
"People remember him for what he did in the past," continues Jocelyn. "Unfortunately they don't realise that he was still on the edge and he could take any machine and bring the best of it. One time, he worked one full month on programming an animation routine for PS2 in a text file. When we received the dev kit from Sony, his code worked the first day. We worked on some interactive water system for *Gauntlet* as well as an interactively lit field of grass. Later he worked on intrinsics math optimisation and parallel execution. He developed a cube lighting technique when we started working on Xbox360 and later on the PS3. In Switzerland we worked for a French company based in Lyon. They were building their own 3D engine for PC but had no real experience on console. They'd been asked to port *The Witcher*, so they hired us. We worked with them to make their engine work on all three platforms. The project ran out of money, so we started working on a project of our own."

Mike Singleton was much more than a game developer; he was a storyteller

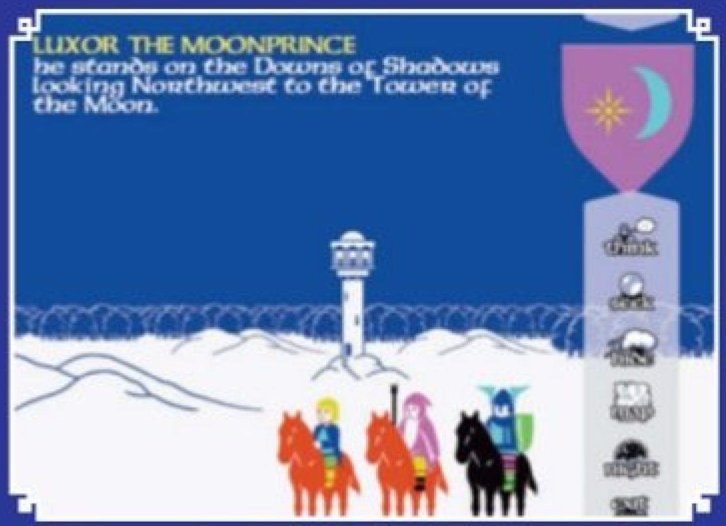
Endgame

It was fitting that Mike was coming full circle at the end. He had returned to teaching, taking Game Design and Development classes at Albert Jacquard School, Namur, Belgium. He felt that he had found a way to give something back.

Tom Wart, one of his students, says of his teacher, "For sure, we've been



[iOS] Mike and Chris were working on a remake of *The Lords Of Midnight* for iOS. It's due a winter solstice release (21/12/2012).



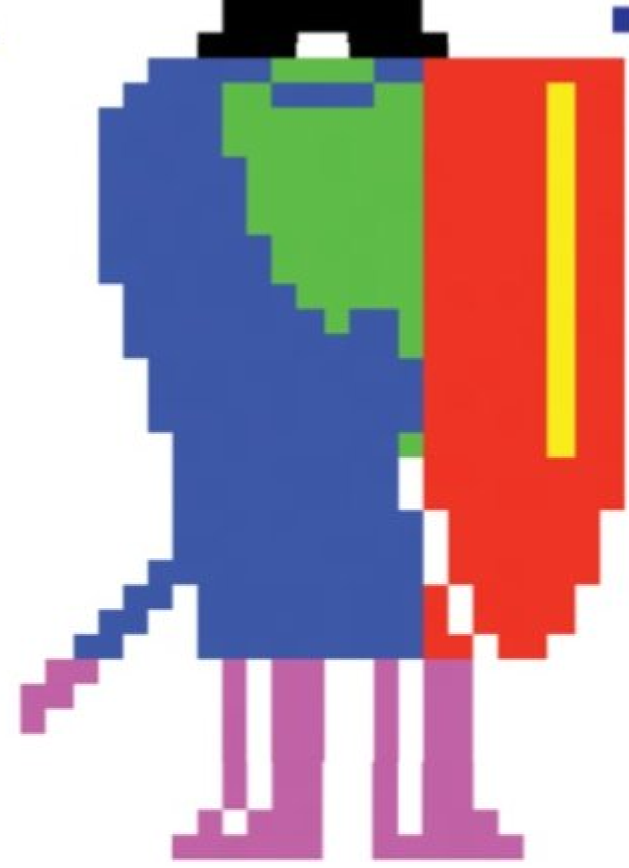
[iOS] Another screenshot from the iOS version of *The Lords Of Midnight*. Note the touch controls on the right hand side.



David Perry
CEO Gaikai Inc



"Mike was one of the most respected (legendary) developers in the booming UK videogame industry. It's really sad to hear that veterans like him and Paul Steed over here in the USA have passed away recently, that said their contributions will never be forgotten. His work was outstanding."



Andrew Braybrook
Graftgold



"That's very sad news. I think I saw Mike at an awards ceremony in the mid-Eighties. *The Lords Of Midnight* was one of those games that we stopped work for to have a close look at. That didn't happen very often. We realised that the bar had been raised with, amongst other things, the landscaping technique. [He was] a great innovator."

learning many things from him at university, but what I keep in mind when I think of him is his kindness, his passion and his patience. We can tell his passion transpired on us and drove us to realise Project Sika, on which he also worked a bit, leading us into a few coding decisions."

Mike was looking at developing on the smaller handheld devices, and with echoes of his birthday present of that calculator, the gift that started him on his career, he'd been given a Kindle for Christmas by his son and was playing around with some techniques for producing a *Midnight*-esque story-led game.

Mike and I were working on the new The Lords Of Midnight, and had plans to bring the whole Midnight saga to phones and tablets. He rewrote the landscaping technique on the iPad, now able to remove all the pre-generated tables that were a requirement of the original and have the landscape flow seamlessly in real-time.

The effect being the ability to look around and move in *Midnight* in a way in which he could only have dreamed of when he first conceived it. He started jotting down game designs and scenarios, writing the story that would be the introduction to *Eye Of The Moon*, and had drawn the start of the twelve maps that the design dictated.

Even while Mike worked for other studios, he was always making notes for game designs, or how to solve a particular technical problem. His family handed me pages of hand written theory or code solutions to problems that Mike was thinking about. He told me a few years ago, about a new design that he'd done for a game. It was a full reworking of an old story and titled *SKYFALL: Year Zero: TOTAL MIDWINTER*

I can't think of any other game developer who has allowed me to escape to another place in the same way that many authors or filmmakers have. The world of Midnight and the Isle Of Midwinter are as inviting as Narnia, Middle-earth, or Discworld. Many of Mike's games shipped with a novella that embellished them with a great deal of back story that furnished the game with much more substance, and allowed you to totally immerse yourself. Mike was responsible for all of that. Mike Singleton was much more than a game developer; he was a storyteller. It just so happens that he chose games as his primary outlet for that.

He once told *Computer & Video Games* that it was his ambition "to write a classic game, the computer equivalent of chess – a game that people will be still playing long after I am dead and gone!" I think Mike not only managed to achieve that, but he did it more than once.

[PS2] One of Mike's projects at LucasArts was *Indiana Jones And The Emperor's Tomb.*





[Xbox] *Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows* is another late game that Mike found himself working on when he was at Midway Games.

Gary Bracey
Ocean Software



"I was saddened to learn of the passing of Mike Singleton who was a true gaming legend. Some people make their mark by 'redefining' a genre or category; Mike actually *defined* one with *Doomdark's Revenge* which seldom gets the credit it deserves. I am proud to be able to pay tribute to Mike and know that his legacy has helped shape gaming through to the present day."

Bill Harbison
Ocean Software

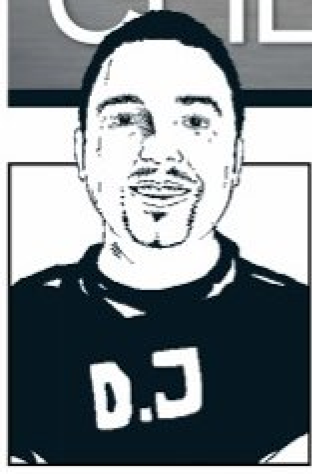


"Like most old-time gamers I have spent many hours playing the games of Mike Singleton, mainly *The Lords Of Midnight*, but it wasn't until I replayed the game recently that I appreciated how rich and complex it is. Superficially, it is a game that takes the depth and imagination of a text adventure and removes the text entirely while leaving the gameplay intact. The graphics in text adventures were often time-consuming and sporadic at best but *The Lords Of Midnight* was probably the first entirely graphical adventure with its clever use of scaling elements to create a seamless environment. As if that wasn't enough, you were in control of not one, but four characters who could travel on quests independently, acquiring troops and forging alliances in order to defeat Doomdark's army. All of this on a 48k ZX Spectrum! It was a work of irrefutable genius!

"Mike was definitely ahead of his time, not only technically but also graphically, and I will be revisiting this classic adventure as soon as I have finished typing this tribute to the man himself. So, thank you, Mike. Thank you for making me spend my summer holidays in my bedroom with the curtains closed, battling dragons."

CLASSIC GAMING FOR UNDER A FIVER

CHEAP AS CHIPS



If there's one thing we've learnt about retro gaming, it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way if you really want it to. Granted, a mint copy of *Radiant Silvergun* is going to cost you a small fortune to procure, but there are plenty of other worthy titles that can be picked up for less than five English pounds…







WORLD OF ILLUSION STARRING MICKEY MOUSE AND DONALD DUCK

INFO

- **SYSTEM:** MEGA DRIVE
- **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- **RELEASED:** 1992
- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **DEVELOPER:** SEGA AM7



Mega Drive owners were blown away when *Castle Of Illusion*, the first game in Sega's *Illusion* series, first appeared on the Mega Drive in 1990. It not only proved that Disney's mascot could be a viable videogame hero, but also showed just how adept Sega was at pushing boundaries with its Mega Drive hardware.

The Donald Duck-starring *Quackshot* appeared a year later on Sega's popular console and proved to be a more than worthy follow-up. Interestingly, *Fantasia*, an Infogrames-developed sequel released the same year was not a patch on the fine efforts put out by Sega AM7.

Nothing was left to chance when Sega continued its Disney assault for the third year running. Infogrames were given the cold shoulder and Sega AM7 once again took the reigns. But how do you create a relevant sequel that will appeal to fans of both Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck? Simple. You put them in the same game.

The end result was the lengthily-titled *World Of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse And Donald Duck*, and it was a superb little platformer that easily captured the friendship of the two mascots. Players could choose to play as either Mickey or Donald in a single-player game depending on their preference. Mickey's lithe form for example allows him to get into tight gaps, which Donald can't otherwise reach access, while Donald… Well, Donald had a really cool animation where he would wig out when the player wasn't controlling him.

As enjoyable as *World Of Illusion* was when playing alone, the real draw was roping in a friend for co-operative shenanigans. The game changed immensely, and not just because the game was larger, due to the addition of extra sections that allowed *World Of Illusion*'s co-op play to shine through. Mickey and Donald could carry each other in order to reach otherwise inaccessible areas, use their bodies as rocks to launch the other player from a strategically placed seesaw, or throw down ropes for the other player to climb up. Mickey could even pull Donald through certain gaps when the angry mallard couldn't fit through them.

The two-player gameplay added immeasurably to the overall experience of *World Of Illusion*, while subtly hiding the fact that, when played on its own, Sega's game is a rather sedate experience. Still, the languid pace that *World Of Illusion* moved at often worked in its favour, as there was so much to see in the beautifully designed stages, which were inspired by classics like *Alice In Wonderland*, *Aladdin* and *Pinocchio*.

World Of Illusion may have been twee, but it was also a highly enjoyable platformer that remains great fun today.



» [Mega Drive] While the bosses are quite impressive to look at, most of them are fairly easy to beat.



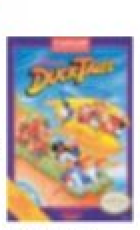
» [Mega Drive] Standing on the shoulders of your buddy is a good way of reaching inaccessible areas.



» [Mega Drive] This spider-infested level is a lovely throwback to the one that appears in *Castle Of Illusion*.

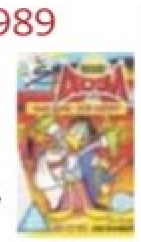
DUCK-TASTIC Donald isn't the only mallard to get a videogame…

Duck Tales 1990



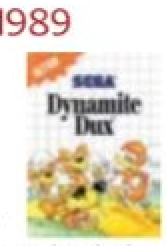
Scrooge McDuck takes centre stage in this tough-as-nails, but highly enjoyable NES platformer. It's a slick effort that's just full of variety, with one level even allowing you to go to the moon.

Count Duckula 1989



This isn't a patch on the David Jason-voiced cartoon. The monochrome graphics cause Duckula to blend into his surroundings, while the flick screen layout has you getting hit by enemies with no chance to protect yourself.

Dynamite Dux 1989



Powered by the same board that unleashed arcade hits *Golden Axe*, *Dynamite Dux* was another scrolling fighter, but one that saw you playing as a bowtie-wearing duck battling disembodied moose heads.

Edd The Duck 1990



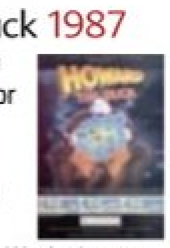
Remember this guy? He was the rubbish BBC puppet who took over once Philip Schofield and Gordon The Gopher left the broom cupboard. Darn. Now we don't have enough space to talk about the game…

Qwak 1989



Originally released on BBC, Jamie Woodhouse's platformer has since been converted to numerous systems, including the Amiga, Mac, GBA and iOS. An ace little platformer, as challenging as it is colourful to look at.

Howard The Duck 1987



Howard The Duck was a massive cinematic flop for George Lucas. *Howard The Duck: Adventure On Volcano Island* was a massive gaming flop for Activision. The game itself is far better than the movie, but so is a root canal.


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40
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Become a member of PlayStation Plus for only £39.99 per year and you get to download over 45 games a year for your PS3 including Motorstorm Apocalypse, LittleBigPlanet 2 and inFamous 2 PLUS over 20 games a year for your PS Vita.
You also get access to online storage, themes and avatars, plus much, much more.
BULLETSTORM
VANQUISH
RATCHET & CLANK ALL 4 ONE
inFAMOUS 2
BATMAN
ARKHAM CITY
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Sensible World of Soccer

Unlike a broken metatarsal, Sensible Soccer was not in need of much fixing. But successor Sensible World Of Soccer was a game changer, proving to be a major influence on the genre. David Crookes looks at how it was made…

"The most important game I ever played in my life was Subutteo," says Jon Hare, becoming enthusiastic at the memory. As a life-long Norwich City fan, football has been in his blood since an early age and, in the absence of videogames, flicking small plastic men around a tiny, felt soccer pitch was, along with actually pulling on a pair of boots, one of the ways he could emulate his heroes.

The Sensible Software co-founder recalls creating his own football games, taking the heads of famous people from packs of Shreddies, sticking them to soft toys, grabbing a ping pong ball and some plastic nets and scoring those infamous last-minute cup final goals which infiltrated his dreams. "Growing up in a pre-computer games era, this is not as mad as it sounds," he laughs.

By the time Jon and his team launched *Sensible World Of Soccer* in 1994, however, Jon was very much in the videogame era. He had been an instrumental figure in the development of *Microprose Soccer* and he had created *Sensible Soccer* in 1992. The latter game had become something of a labour of love for Sensible Software. Having had control of the development, they injected it with everything they felt would make a good football game. For them, *Sensible Soccer* was their project and they wanted it to stand alone on its miniature feet. This was not about creating the look of a real match but the feel of one.

"After *Sensible Soccer* came out in 1992, we didn't stop working on it," says Jon about Sensible's hit game. "Our programmer, Chris Chapman, ensured



the development process was never broken. So as he carried on working, we were able to inject more features and work on a game that really would become the ultimate football game, in our eyes at least. That's how *Sensible World Of Soccer* came into being."

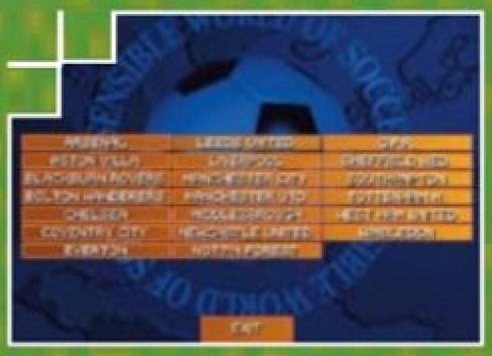
Like a football manager eyeing up the Champions League, Sensible Software wanted to move away from domestic competition and take on the entire world. Much time was taken to include national and international teams. There were more than 27,000 players in more than 1,500 clubs. "We were very thorough," Jon says, without batting an eyelid. "And that is because of the roots which go back to Subbuteo. That game was international and it had different kits. You had all the different international teams and I think *SWOS* was an ideal way of just turning our game into a modern Subbuteo on a computer, not in the sense of flicking players around but playing football as realistically as possible, given the constraints. I think that that was probably part of it. Personally, I'm quite attracted to things that are about the world and different countries, and how that works, and it was nice to map the football world out of the game."

Coder Chris Chapman relished the opportunity to get stuck in. He had played *Kick Off* to death while he was making *Mega Lo Mania* and he had always thought he could do a better job. He had turned *Sensible Soccer* around in nine months of very late nights, completing it in time for the 1992 Euros, but that hadn't put him off trying to make a sequel. So work continued, with a deadline of the World Cup of 1994 in mind. It proved to be a tough job that led to the Amiga version being delayed (and the PC version seemingly running on Fergie time) but the team felt it was on to something.

Had it decided to just go with a simple update, all would have been well. But the developer thought it would be a good idea to give *Sensible World Of Soccer* a player-manager element with a 20-year career. Sensible Software wanted to make this light, lowering the level of financial management. Jon felt that there wasn't a good player-manager game out at the time and he said he was happy to fill the gap but he didn't want to distract from the actual play too much. It was, he added, a logical step.

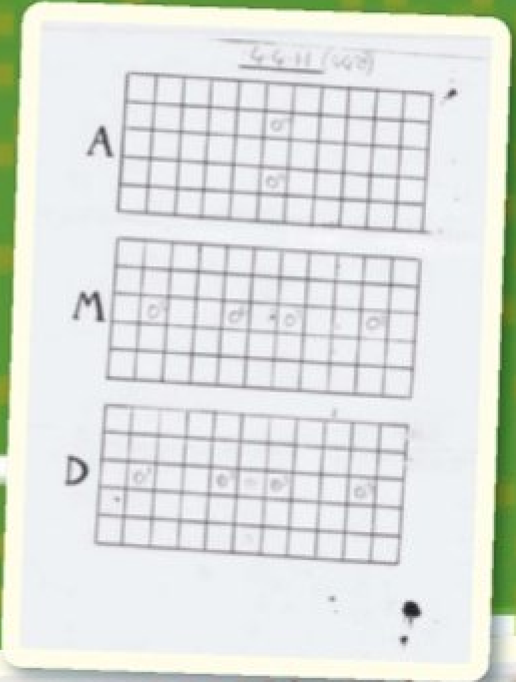
"What we wanted with the management part was a change to buying players and selling them so that whatever team you were – whether Rochdale, Aldershot or whatever – then you'd be able to buy players and stick them in your team and see what happened," he says. "It was fun to have that ability and buy a player from, say, Venezuela and see if he worked."

For the team, it was an example of thinking big – "I like things which are quite jaw-droppingly big," says Jon. "I find them quite naturally attractive" – and they believe a project on that scale today would be extremely expensive. "If you imagine the scale of *SWOS* and imagine doing that on modern consoles with modern players, that's a big job. Imagine the whole scope of the work, the 3D models of the stadiums, the detail that would be needed. We did that on the technology we had available to us at the time in our own way and it worked so well."



IN THE KNOW

- **PUBLISHER:** RENEGADE
- **DEVELOPER:** SENSIBLE SOFTWARE
- **RELEASED:** 1994
- **PLATFORM:** AMIGA, PC
- **GENRE:** FOOTBALL
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** 800 MICROSOFT POINTS (IT'S OUT ON XBOX LIVE!)



» The *Sensible World Of Soccer* promo took place in Saffron Walden Town FC's stadium. Sensible Software used to sponsor the team, which is one of the oldest clubs in the UK.





THE TEAMS

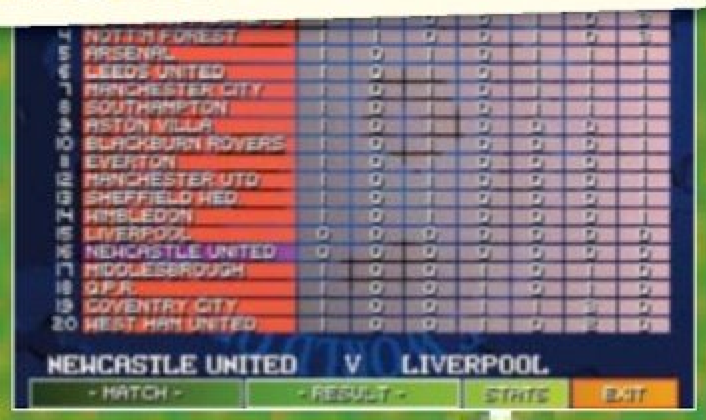
BEING ABLE TO work rather informally helped the team. No-one, says Jon Hare, was able to peer over their shoulder and tell them not to waste their time including Yugoslavia, South Korea, New Zealand, El Salvador, Argentina, South Africa, Nigeria, Mexico and all of those other dozens of countries which were included in the game.

It was the first football videogame to have blonde and black-haired players and the first to represent the teams from over 90 leagues all around the world.

"In those days you didn't need the welter of licences that modern games companies are forced to wade through and given that freedom it was my intention to build a game anyone in the world could identify with," says Jon. "We really embraced those countries and included them in the game in a legitimate way, giving them as much attention as we did the UK and Germany, France and bigger countries. I think that was something we did deliberately and over time has proven to have been a great thing to have done because you can appreciate that even now, I think."



» **[PC]** Note the crowd and the perimeter fence for authenticity.



» **[PC]** The league tables were presented to show progress.

THE MAKING OF



Suffice to say, they worked hard to match that ambition. The original design document for *Sensible World Of Soccer* stretches over seven pages of A4, scribbled down, rather quaintly, in biro. Of all of the aspects of the game, however, interfacing the management with the play was most important to Sensible Software. Formations could change and each player could be positioned in any way you wished. It was comprehensive and detailed and with some work, you could have even the worst team performing above their best.

The management side proved difficult to implement, though. "I remember the chairman and how he made his decisions was tricky," confesses Chris. "It was very difficult to keep track of and debug chairman decisions when the overall effect would be seen over several games or seasons. We also had to get our heads around creating and maintaining the team and player database. This was a major job as each player had to have his own set of attributes. We had a very knowledgeable guy working on this so we just had to get the game to work with the numbers to try and make each player play the way he was supposed to but it wasn't easy."

The encyclopaedia of data needed for the game was compiled by Mike Hammond, one of the authors of the football stat bible, the *Rothman's Yearbook* and it was a monumental effort. Then there was the play on the field itself. Gameplay was refined with the ability to deflect passes, for instance. The team improved the goalkeeper AI and work was carried out on the formations. "The players had to have individual levels in each of the skills but this was mainly for the computer players," says Chris. "Running speed was the easy one but we also had to make them able to tackle successfully or not based on their individual skill as well as handle their shooting accuracy and so on. Basically we just started with them being as good as they could be and just made them imperfect based on their skill."

All of this didn't break the core of *Sensible Soccer*, however. "Chris always said he didn't quite know how we'd gotten to that point of getting a good engine but he didn't want to mess it up, so we were always quite careful to not play around with our magic formula too much," says Jon. "There was more focus on interfacing the tactics properly with the gameplay so it was well balanced and also well balanced on the AI. The strategy, the AI, and the controls were a triangle and we had to make sure they all balanced with each other."

The visuals – those tiny sprites that were influenced by *Populous*, infiltrated *Mega Lo Mania*, became popular in *Cannon Fodder* and were Sensible's trademark – were largely left alone, although stadia was created and crowds appeared around the pitch, adding to the atmosphere. The small players and a bigger viewing area in Sensible Soccer continued, down to the developer's style at the time. "There was an awful lot of menu work, though" says Jon. "I mean the bulk of the work was menu design and database management for *SWOS*. But the game itself had already been proven in *Sensible Soccer* two years earlier. We didn't want to break it too much. Visually there was very little work done, just some enhancements really."

These included new crowd art by artist Stoo Cambridge. "I also worked on the menu graphics and conversion to consoles," he says. Stoo converted the original Amiga art to the Mega Drive and SNES for an *International Soccer* version of *Sensi*. "There was a recolouring trick on the Amiga which had enough variations to cover the different kit colours and styles without the need to store silly amounts of sprite data," he also tell us. "I kept this in my conversions."

Sensible Soccer's engine had given *SWOS* a gigantic framework to work with and those who had played the original would not have wanted to see a major departure (consider the ill-fated foray into 3D for an example of that). But the pressure was on the team to produce something spectacular, especially since *Kick Off* and *FIFA International Soccer* had also gained a major fan base. Rather than start analysing the competition, however, Sensible stuck to its own thing.

"We didn't look at any other games at all," Stoo states. "In fact, we never analysed any other games to make any games we made at Sensible. Yes, we did take influence from things like arcade machines and *Kick Off* was inspirational because we played it so much but that was during the making of *Mega Lo Mania*. We just did our own thing after that. I've always believed that over-analysing and the whole thing about analytics invites loads of non-creatives into a creative industry. Look at *SWOS*, which is a

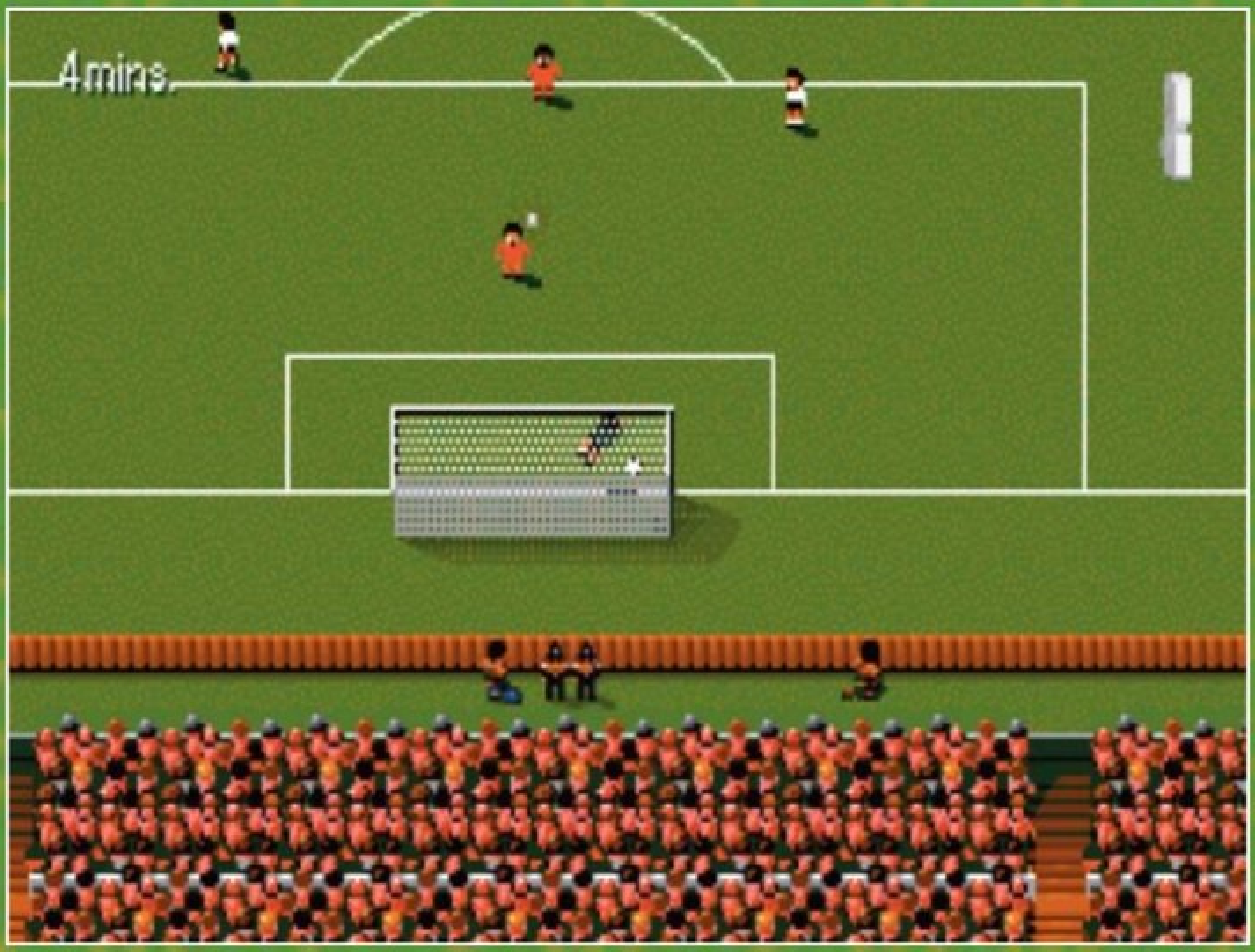


DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

WIZBALL (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: AMSTRAD CPC, COMMODORE 64, ZX SPECTRUM, AMIGA, ATARI ST, PC
YEAR: 1987

MICROPROSE SOCCER
SYSTEM: AMIGA, AMSTRAD CPC, ATARI ST, COMMODORE 64, PC, ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1988

CANNON FODDER
SYSTEM: AMIGA, ATARI ST, ARCHIMEDES, JAGUAR, MEGA DRIVE, SNES, GAME BOY COLOR
YEAR: 1993



» [PC] Fulham weren't much cop back then as Liverpool (who aren't much cop now) slam one past on four minutes.


GEN 7. GENERAL CARD TO BE GIVEN TACKLE
(foul commited and caution about to be given)
"yellow card surely"
"surely he must go for that"
"he's got to go surely"
"must be a booking"
"he must be in trouble here"

GEN 8. GENERAL FOUL TACKLE
(foul commited and no caution about to be given)
"clumsy challenge"
"awful challenge" (27)
"and a mistimed tackle"
"a foul surely"
"foul"

(i) Foul Slide Tackle General
(and fouling tackle was slide tackle)
"cynical tackle"
"dreadful tackle" (27)
"dangerous tackle"
"dirty play"
"that was a dirty foul"
"totally unnecessary" (86) (27)

(ii) Freekick Tackle
(and foul was not commited in defender's penalty area)
"that must be a freekick"
"freekick"

(iii) Penalty Tackle
(and foul was commited in defender's penalty area)
"that must be a penalty"
"it was inside the box"
"penalty surely"
"dreadful defending" (27)

(iv) Possible Second yellow card Tackle





» **[PC]** It's a throw in. *SWOS* closely followed the rules of football making it a thrilling game.





whole bunch of menus. We never had QA departments. All of that design really came from just like a couple of us making sure the game was good. I think a game like *SWOS* proves that you don't need so many people involved in the process; so many people not trusting creative people to make the right decisions."

In a bid to get the game out in time for Christmas 1994, Chris stayed at the office for five days and had eight hours sleep in total during that time, kipping while slumped in his chair. "I washed my hair in the loo's wash basin and I must have stunk but there was no way I was going home until it was finished so Graeme Boxhall could take it to the duplicators," he recalls. "I believe I had a phone call the next day as Graham was testing it at the duplicators and thought there was a gameplay 'funny' – something to do with the chairman, I think. So I had to check through the code to make sure that it was working correctly. It was, thank god, but if not I would have cried."



Such was Chris's dedication to the crunch period and the game, he discovered years later that his wife suspected him of having an affair. "I can't blame them, I suppose, as it's not a normal way of working," he says. "They had driven to make sure I was really at the office but they were able to see me in the windows."



Not that everything went entirely smoothly. Although the game went down a storm and sold more than 100,000 copies, soaring to number one, there was a bug in the code. "It was in the decision-making for when the computer player would take a throw in," says Chris. "He was supposed to turn on the spot until a computer player was suitably positioned but sometimes he would lock up and never throw the ball. Not good!"

Following much criticism, a quick fix patch was released in February 1995 on Amiga magazine coverdisks and a full-featured update was later vsent to registered owners. "There was incredible pressure to fix the bug as you can imagine," says Chris.

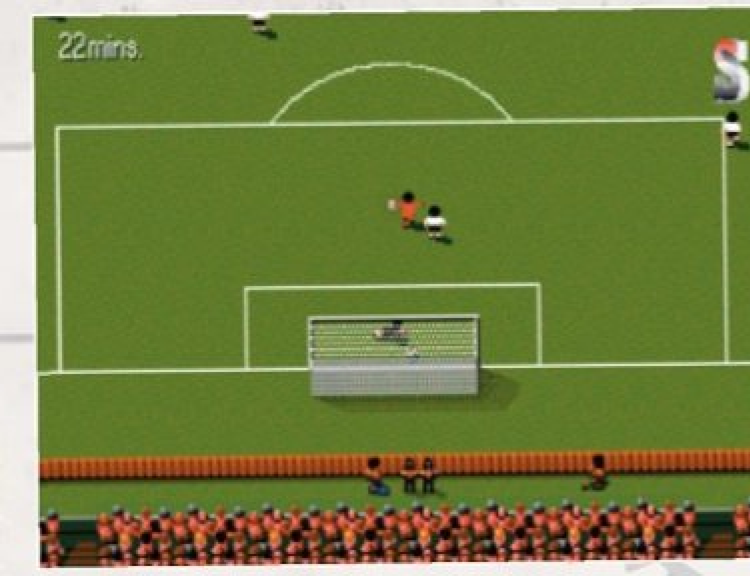
Ultimately, however, *Sensible World Of Soccer* proved to be a championship-winning game. It was ranked the best game of all time by *Amiga Power* and, in 2007, it was named one of the ten most important games of all time by Stanford University. It has since been converted to run on Xbox Live Arcade. All of which makes it a remarkable result for Sensible Software. And that is not lost on Jon. "The boys did good," he laughs, with a degree of modesty. "We were very proud."

We didn't look at any other games at all. In fact, we never analysed any other games to make any of the games we made at Sensible

JON HARE'S TOP SWOS TIPS

1 Get a good joystick; a joystick you're comfortable with. The little red and black ones worked for us. Yeah, the Speedking was the stick of choice in our office and Chris Chapman would smash them up playing conkers.

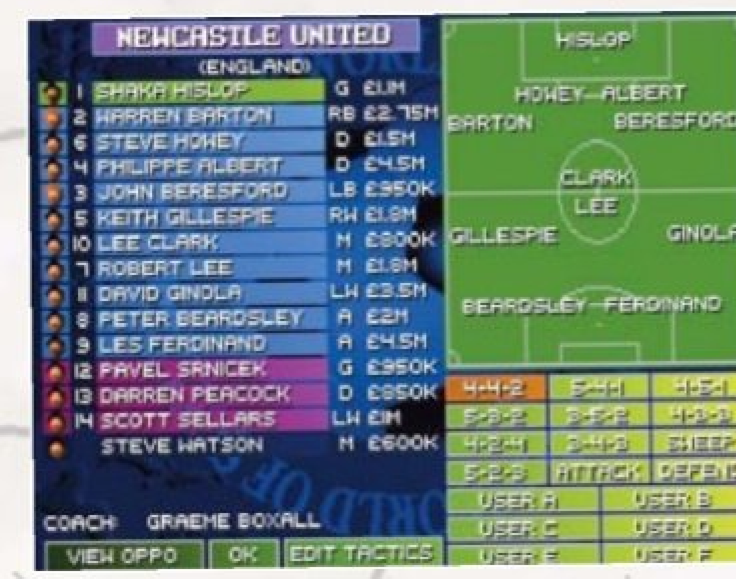




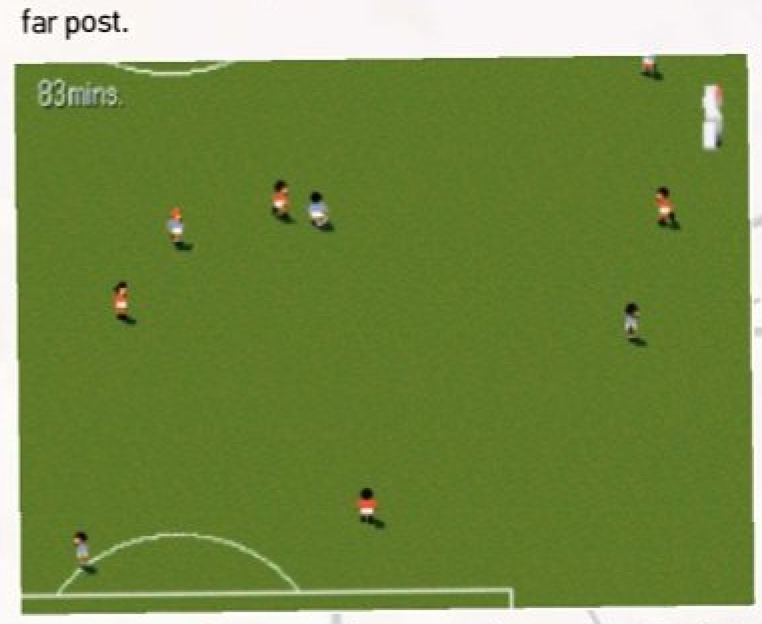
2 When defending, anticipate opposition movements early and move the player in to tackle as early as possible. In *SWOS*, 50 per cent of the time you're defending, so focus on having a good strong defence and make those break runs upfield.



3 Find three or more favoured ways of scoring. When you have the ball, pass quickly before the opposition can close you down and keep moving up. Work out what to do from corners, too. I favour the swerved cross and far post.



4 Don't make any changes pre-game that give you too many crosses (the ticks and crosses are like advice from your coaching staff). And in the second half of the match, use the bench to change formation to respond to the game's circumstance... just like real football.



5 The most important players are the goalkeeper, the striker, the main striker, and central midfield. Then learn how much you can turn as this helps you keep the ball – remember control skill gives players better ball retention when dribbling.



6 Check out Mills Pagwhara in the Indian League and play with a team of 11 guys all called Singh. I challenge players to win the European Cup by inserting this team (or Once Lobos from El Salvador) in place of one of the European lower lights.

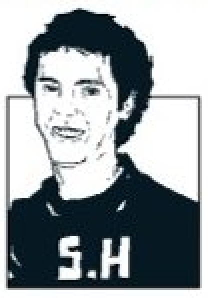

Km/H
97
91
3.
PLAYE
BLUE



» RETROREVIVAL

Slalom

FIRST LOVE ON THE SLOPES



» NES
» 1987
» RARE

***Slalom* is one of those videogames that's impossible not to like. It looks nice, it's fun and accessible, and to top it all off it has a bit of history too: it marked Rare and Nintendo's first ever romantic embrace, a cupid's arrow that helped form a much publicised videogame relationship that verged on Brangelina and Wills and Kate type proportions at one stage.**

Indeed, back in the Nineties, if Rare and Nintendo had been famous, pretty people then the paparazzo would have been clawing each other's eyes out to get intrusive blurry snaps of them sunbathing together on a private yacht somewhere in the Caribbean. And let's be honest, there isn't a soppy-hearted retro gamer alive who wouldn't love to see the two of them get back together again, regardless of how improbable such an Earth-tilting reunion happening is.

Anyway, back to *Slalom*. Well, like most Stamper Bros. games, it's an impressive beast visually and technically, and like its creators, started life in the arcades where it debuted on Nintendo's arcade Vs. System bearing the name *Vs. Slalom*, before it was ported to the NES the following year. *Slalom* is essentially a checkpoint racer, one that sees you lead a little skiing dude with the most animated 8-bit arse in videogame history through 24 different tracks, split across three mountains courses of varying difficulties.

On these perilous routes are obstacles which obviously have to be avoided, and slalom gates that must be passed on the correct side. Pass on the wrong side, or stumble into a snowman, rival racer, trees, or basically anything that isn't pure driven snow, it slows your racer down. It is also possible to perform various airborne tricks, which award extra points but at the risk of losing valuable speed if you fail to perform them correctly. It therefore becomes vital that you pass every gate and pay close attention to what's coming up ahead on screen to successfully complete the later courses.

Slalom certainly isn't the most famous nor fondly remembered Rare creation but it does contain plenty of charm. So if you fancy getting piste, why not take to its slopes?

NINTENDO LEGENDS

To celebrate the release of Nintendo Land, Retro Gamer takes a ride through time to look at the classic franchises that Nintendo has selected to demonstrate the party potential of its latest console



THE 12 GAMES OF NINTENDO LAND

- Octopus Dance
- Donkey Kong's Crash Course
- Balloon Trip Breeze
- Mario Chase
- The Legend Of Zelda: Battle Quest
- Metroid Blast
- Takamaru's Ninja Castle
- Captain Falcon's Twister Race
- Yoshi's Fruit Cart
- Luigi's Ghost Mansion
- Animal Crossing: Sweet Day
- Pikmin Adventure





FULL REVIEW ON PAGE 96



Nintendo is the Walt Disney of videogames. The creator of some of the most popular, recognised and iconic videogame characters of all time, the likes of Mario, Link and Donkey Kong are familiar all around the world. Now fully embedded in gaming culture, these characters are more a measure of what Nintendo is and represents in the eyes of gamers than the consoles and the developers that bring them to life. To the extent that if Nintendo launched a new machine and didn't release a new *Super Mario, Zelda* or *Super Mario Kart,* it would rank as one of the most bizarre and catastrophic strategies in the history of commerce – akin to a premiership football team ditching its entire team of star players to sign a squad of unknown quantities to keep fans on their toes. To celebrate the release of *Nintendo Land*, **Retro Gamer** takes a ride through Nintendo's history using the classic franchises and characters selected to demonstrate the power of its latest console.

EVOLUTION OF OCTOPUS

Octopus

GAME & WATCH



Released in 1981, *Octopus* saw Mr. G&W recovering sunken treasure guarded by the whipping tentacles of a giant octopus.



Game & Watch Gallery series

GAME BOY



Octopus later appeared in volumes 1 and 4 of Nintendo's Game & Watch Gallery series for Game Boy.



1981 OCTOPUS

INSPIRED: OCTOPUS DANCE



Before the NES, before Mario and Donkey Kong, there was Game & Watch: a series of dedicated LCD handheld consoles that doubled up as entertaining time keepers. A full G&W collection encompasses 60 games in a variety of different flavours – dubbed 'series' – including Tabletop (mini arcade), Multi Screen (dual screen) and Vs. System (multiplayer). The G&W is notable for being the first Nintendo product to use the Nintendo D-pad (first seen on *Donkey Kong G&W*), and for providing the platform for Nintendo's first-ever versatile hero in Mr. Game & Watch. *Octopus* is seen by many collectors as one of the more challenging games in the G&W library. It sees Mr. Game & Watch play the role of a diver trying to retrieve treasure guarded by a giant octopus. Octopus has since appeared and been referenced in several Nintendo games, like *Smash Bros. Brawl*.

Game & Watch Collection 2

DS

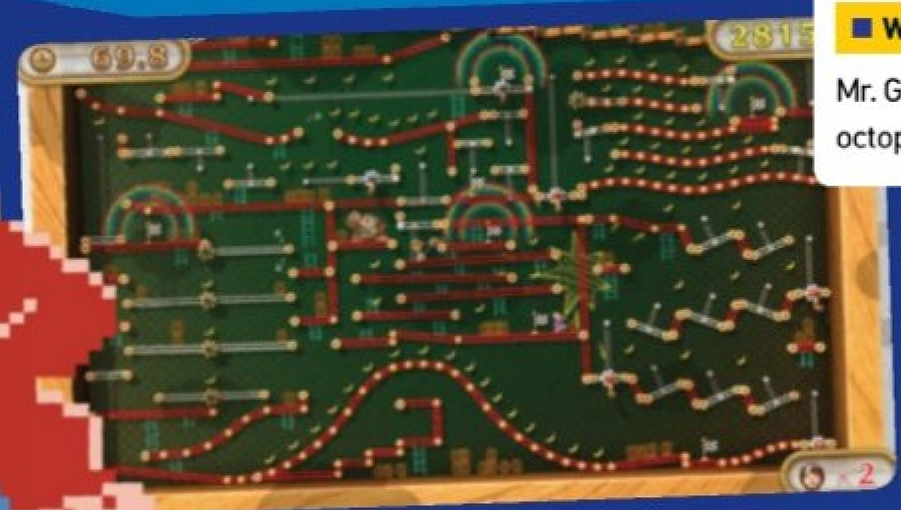
Octopus also appeared on this G&W compilation for the DS, available exclusively to Nintendo Club members.

Super Smash Bros. Brawl

WII



Mr. G&W transformed into an octopus in Nintendo's mascot fighter.





1981 DONKEY KONG

INSPIRED: DONKEY KONG'S CRASH COURSE

EVOLUTION OF DONKEY KONG

It's time to return to one of our favourite retro gaming stories. In 1979, Nintendo created a *Space Invaders* clone called *Radar Scope* that did reasonable business in Japan but failed to strike a chord with gamers in the US. This left Nintendo of America facing a potential fiasco as hundreds of unsold and returned *Radar Scope* cabinets filled its US warehouse. It was then that a young Shigeru Miyamoto was given the assignment by Nintendo's then-president Hiroshi Yamauchi of designing a new game that could be fitted into the cabinets. At the time Nintendo was pursuing the *Popeye* licence, but when the deal didn't happen Miyamoto came up with his own spin on the cartoon's love-triangle theme. He replaced Popeye, Olive Oil and Bluto with Jumpman (renamed Mario in the US), Lady (renamed Pauline in the US) and Donkey Kong, respectively. Released in 1981, *Donkey Kong* became a massive hit for Nintendo, turning its fortune around and establishing Nintendo in the North American videogame market.





Donkey Kong Country Returns

WII

Co-developed by Retro Studios, *Donkey Kong Country Returns* saw a revisit to the challenging run-and-jump frolics of the 16-bit games.



Donkey Kong

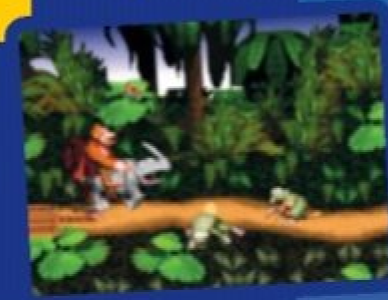
ARCADE



Seminal platformer popular for its cartoon visuals and varied stages, it marked Mario's gaming debut and a crucial game for Nintendo in America.

Donkey Kong Country

SUPER NINTENDO



After a hiatus, the series returned to screens with the help of Rare, the power of the Super Nintendo and a few Silicon Graphics systems.

Donkey Kong 64

N64

Rare was responsible for creating Donkey Kong's first 3D outing, and for bringing the DK Rap to our ears.



1984 BALLOON FIGHT

INSPIRED: BALLOON TRIP BREEZE

Or *Mario Bros.* meets *Joust*. *Balloon Fight* debuted on the Nintendo Vs. System arcade format in 1984 before being ported to the NES two years later. Its gameplay is split into two different modes. The first, Balloon Mode, plays like *Joust* and sees players work either alone or cooperatively to clear screens of balloon-holding enemies by nudging into their balloons. Controlling a character holding two balloons himself, if one was lost during battle it was harder for your character to gain altitude, and if both popped it was game over. The second mode, Balloon Trip, saw players trying to reach checkpoints while avoiding obstacles, a hungry fish, and bumping into enemies' balloons. *Balloon Fight* was one of the earliest games from *Metroid* co-creator Yoshio Sakamoto – before *Balloon Fight,* he'd previously worked on Game & Watch projects. Not becoming an IP juggernaut for Nintendo in the same league as *Mario* and *Zelda*, *Balloon Fight* only spawned two sequels (and one of those is a spin-off). However, its balloon-popping gameplay has been referenced in plenty of Nintendo games, including *Mario Party* and *Super Mario Kart*.





EVOLUTION OF BALLOON FIGHT

Balloon Fight

■ ARCADE

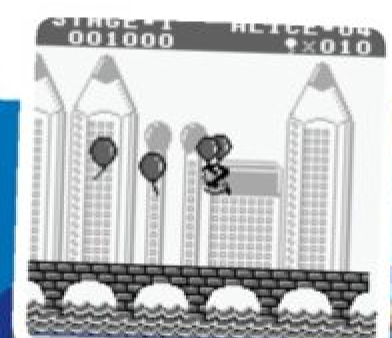
Described as Nintendo's *Joust*, *Balloon Fight*'s gameplay was split into two very distinct modes, giving it a bit more variety than most NES games.



Balloon Kid

■ GAME BOY

This handheld sequel stuck to the *Balloon Trip* gameplay but gelled with elements of *Super Mario Land*.



Tingle's Balloon Fight

■ DS

A Nintendo Club exclusive for DS that plonked *Zelda* oddball Tingle in his own version of the game.

WarioWare: Smooth Moves

■ GAMECUBE

A 3D version of *Balloon Trip* mode also appeared in this entry of the popular minigame compendium.



1985 SUPER MARIO BROS.

INSPIRED: MARIO CHASE

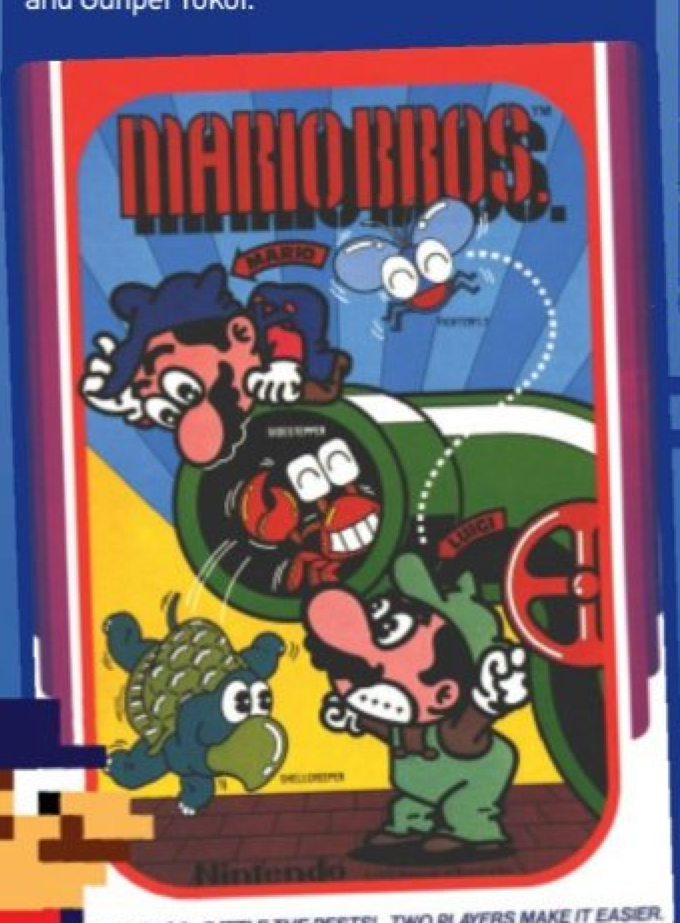
A perfect storm of distinctive visuals, gameplay and music, *Super Mario Bros.* redefined the platform genre, strengthened Nintendo's reputation in the West, and marked the most decisive step in turning Mario into one of gaming's biggest icons. Sequel to the 1983 single-screen platformer that reinvented Mario as a plumber and gave him a brother, it's believed *Super Mario Bros.* came about as a swan song project for the Famicom as Nintendo turned its focus to the Famicom Disk System, which at the time was preparing for launch. It is also supposed that *Super Mario Bros.* was originally intended to play more like a run-and-gun, before the decision was taken to sway the gameplay and method of crushing enemies towards jumping. *Super Mario Bros.* became the best-selling game for the NES, shifting over 40 million copies worldwide and dwarfing the sales of the number two game, *Super Mario Bros. 3*, by over 20 million units (note though, this figure does include all those *Duck Hunt/SMB* NES bundle carts).

EVOLUTION OF THE MARIO BROS

Mario Bros.

■ ARCADE

This original platformer starred Mario and Luigi as plumbers/exterminators cleaning up NY sewers. It was co-designed by Miyamoto and Gunpei Yokoi.



Super Mario World

■ SUPER NINTENDO

An epic and challenging sequel. Taking place in Dinosaur Land, it featured more stages (nine world and 96 levels), new moves and power-ups.



Super Mario 64

■ N64

Seminal 3D platformer that rendered Mario's world in stunning 3D, making it more open world in feel, which helped to sell millions of N64s.



Super Mario Galaxy

■ WII

Starting development as a tech demo to show off some spherical platform-generating tech to create mini worlds, *Super Mario Galaxy* is one of the most acclaimed *Mario* games ever.

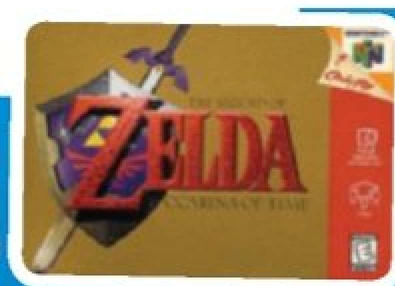


The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time

N64

A common entry on greatest videogame lists, *Ocarina Of Time* was a landmark title in terms of 3D gaming, controls and storytelling.

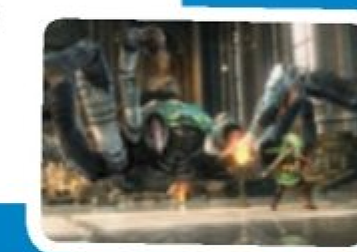




The Legend Of Zelda: Skyward Sword

WII

Skyward is the best *Zelda* game to utilise motion controls (*Twilight Princess* was the first). It lived up to the promise, and marks yet another superb *Zelda*.



The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past

SUPER NINTENDO

A Link To The Past was a milestone RPG and a turning point in the series that sealed *Zelda*'s classic status.

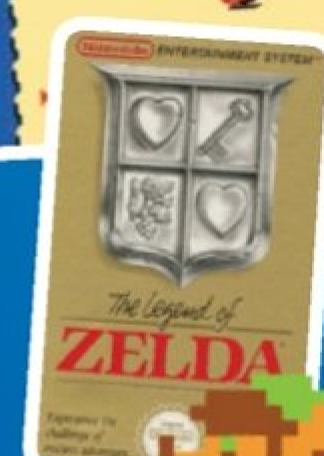


The Legend Of Zelda

FDS/NES

A seminal console release, *The Legend Of Zelda* was highly praised for its open world and non-linear explorative gameplay.





EVOLUTION OF THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

1986 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

INSPIRED: THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: BATTLE QUEST

Inspired by the green, tranquil forest surroundings of Sonobe, Japan near where he grew up, and his experience of venturing into a spooky cave with only a lantern to light his way, *The Legend Of Zelda* is arguably Miyamoto's most personal videogame. But he didn't do it alone. *The Legend Of Zelda*'s co-creator and co-story writer was designer Takeshi Tezuka. A big fan of the works of fantasy novelist J.R.R. Tolkien, Tezuka's influence is also clear – a small elfin hero who embarks on a massive adventure, the main players in the story are seeking the Tri-Force (a triangle) rather than the powerful One Ring (a circle), and is it not possible that Gannon could be a portmanteau of Gandalf and Sauron? Whether *The Legend Of Zelda*'s story was inspired by Tolkien's tale is uncertain, but what isn't is the impact it had on RPG games. For many console gamers it marked the first time they had been plonked in a virtual world and asked to go out, explore and forge their own adventure. There were no levels to beat, no barriers to follow or hands to hold. *The Legend Of Zelda* first appeared on the Famicom Disk System, but later become the fifth best-selling game on the NES, with over six million copies sold.



EVOLUTION OF METROID

Metroid

NES

Metroid is notable for giving videogames its first strong female lead and tying exploration and progress with run-and-gun gameplay and character levelling up.



1986 METROID

INSPIRED: METROID BLAST



Metroid is a game of shocks and surprises. Famously taking inspiration for its design from the 1979 movie *Alien*, it marked a big departure from Nintendo typical cutesy games. It also stood out from most RPG titles, mixing together the themes of action, sci-fi and adventure with gameplay that had an onus on exploration, retracing steps and powering up your character. But the biggest surprise arrived upon completion, as finishing it within a strict two-hour time limit rewarded you with one of the earliest examples of a shock videogame ending, which saw Samus remove the suit to reveal that she was a woman. Dark and challenging, Metroid told the story of a bounty hunter tasked with retrieving stolen organisms known as Metroids from Space Pirates. Sent to infiltrate the pirate's planet of Zebes, Samus's mission was to retrieve them, defeat the pirate boss Mother Brain, and blow up the planet – nothing too taxing, then.

Super Metroid

SUPER NINTENDO

Many regard *Super Metroid* as the best in the series. It's a huge adventure that enhanced every aspect of the original.





Metroid Prime

GAME CUBE

Metroid got no N64 love, but *Prime* made up for that. Despite the change to a first-person perspective, it did well. The review scores speak for themselves.

Metroid: Other M

WII

Team Ninja formed part of the development team of this *Metroid* sequel, which moved the franchise into third-person run-and-gun territory.







Nazo No Murasame Jō
FDS

An early release for the Famicom Disk System that failed to gain the popularity of Nintendo's other franchises or see release outside Japan.

No Murasame Jō Famicom Mini Series
GBA

No Murasame Jō was featured in the third series of Nintendo's Famicom Series, a collection of 30 Famicom games (ten per series) released for the GBA.





Captain Rainbow
WII

Takamaru played a cameo role as a samurai with women troubles living in a rundown dojo.



No Murasame Jō Virtual Console
WII

It also received a digital release on the Virtual Console service in Japan.

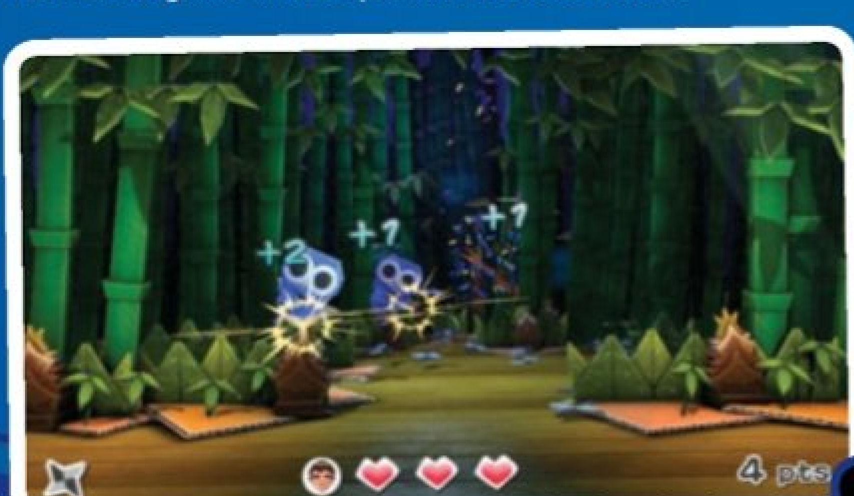




1986 NAZO NO MURASAME JŌ

INSPIRED: TAKAMARU'S NINJA CASTLE

This obscure overhead run-and-gun was released exclusively for the Famicom Disk System in Japan, and was on the console's earliest games – it was initially planned to be a launch game. Controlling a trainee samurai armed with throwing stars and a katana (used in close combat and capable of deflecting enemy projectiles), *Nazo No Murasame Jō* (which translates to *The Mysterious Murasame Castle*) sees you fighting armies of ninjas, swordsmen and demons to reach a series of castles and defeat their evil landlords. There are five to conquer, and each mission is split into two: the fight to get to the castle, and the battle inside. During the missions, powers can be picked up including fireballs, a handy invisibility cloak, and a lightning attack that hits all enemies on-screen. There are also princesses to rescue who award extra lives, but be cautious as some are cheeky demons in disguise. *Nazo No Murasame Jō* was directed by graphic designer/animator Minoru Maeda, who is perhaps most famous for leading the development of *ExciteBike*.



EVOLUTION OF NAZO NO MURASAME JŌ





1990 F-ZERO



INSPIRED: CAPTAIN FALCON'S TWISTER RACE

F-Zero's history is said to trace back to a toy bike that Nintendo released in their toy-making days, one that served the basis for an obscure NES game titled *Mach Rider* – a futuristic racing game that plays like *Road Blasters* crossed with *Super Hang-On*. Believed to be the spiritual successor to *Mach Rider, F-Zero* was a key launch game for the Super Nintendo as it showed off the dazzling power of Mode 7 – the impressive background-scaling and rotation effect – to wonderful effect. Here, it was used to turn flat backgrounds into pseudo 3D tracks. Though it's been criticised for feeling a bit shallow, and thus seen by some as something of a tech demo, *F-Zero* was strapping proof that games consoles could finally start replicating the look and feel of thrilling arcade racers. The chief man behind the look, design and world of *F-Zero*, and many of its sequels, was Nintendo designer Takaya Imamura – who later designed the world and characters for *StarFox*. Given their futuristic settings, big characters and vehicle-themed gameplay, it's no surprise that both games are strongly connected.



F-Zero
SUPER NINTENDO

Iconic futuristic racer and crucial SNES launch title, lauded as the fastest, most visually stunning racing game on consoles at the time.

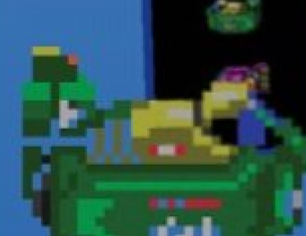




EVOLUTION OF F-ZERO

Mach Rider
ARCADE/NES

Obscure NES racing/shooting game set in the future and stars an heroic biker shooting evil alien invaders, it is seen a spiritual predecessor to *F-Zero*.







F-Zero X
N64

Impressing through its speed, 60fps frame rate and handling an impressive 30 racers, *F-Zero X* retained the game speed record.





F-Zero GX
GAMECUBE

This collaboration between Sega and Nintendo was notable for introducing a story mode to the series and spawning an arcade counterpart in *F-Zero AX*.





EVOLUTION OF YOSHI

1990 YOSHI



INSPIRED: YOSHI'S FRUIT CART

We all know that Yoshi burst onto the scene as Mario's loyal green steed in *Super Mario World*, but you might not be aware of is that Miyamoto wanted to give the Mario Bros. a dinosaur sidekick ever since the original *Super Mario Bros*. However, tech limitations are said to have blocked the realisation of the idea. Said to have been inspired by a mix of cowboy cinema, Miyamoto's apparent love for horse riding, and the little motocross riders in *Excitebike*, Mario's 16-bit debut finally brought Yoshi to life. A green dinosaur with an appetite to match Kirby's and a tongue to match the mouth tail of Gene Simmons, he's become a popular staple of the Mario franchise – to the extent that he played the main hero in *Super Mario 2: Yoshi's Island*, and received his own solo projects, including tile match puzzler *Yoshi's Cookie*, the Mode 7 light gun game *Yoshi's Safari* and even his own platform series in *Yoshi's Story*. Plus, Nintendo's first ever dinosaur hero was Tamagon, who appeared in the Miyamoto-produced *Pac-Man* clone *Devil World*. Though he looked more like Bub and Bob in-game, artwork that appeared in *Super Smash Bros. Melee* showed him looking a bit like Yoshi.

Devil World

FAMICON

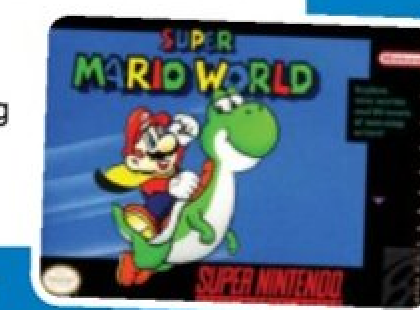
Controversial *Pac-Man*-alike (due to religious themes), *Devil World* stars a green dragon called Tamagon – some believe he could have inspired Yoshi.



Super Mario World

SUPER NINTENDO

Yoshi's first appearance was in the *Mario* sequel. He played a dinosaur mount capable of ensnaring and spitting out his enemies.





Super Mario Sunshine

GAMECUBE

Yoshi's first 3D outing. Unlike in *Super Mario Land*, he wasn't easy to find. You had to rescue him from Shadow Mario, and keep him awake by feeding him fruit.



Super Mario Galaxy 2

WII

Kept back for the Wii sequel, using the Star Pointer players could control Yoshi's tongue and use it to grab enemies and swing across platforms.







2001 LUIGI'S MANSION

INSPIRED: LUIGI'S GHOST MANSION

Luigi's Mansion wasn't Luigi's first lead role in a videogame. Previously he played the hero in the forgettable edutainment game *Mario Is Missing*. However, his best star turn was in the GameCube launch game *Luigi's Mansion* – which once again saw him searching for his brother, who has mysteriously disappeared and his last known location is a spooky mansion. Armed with a torch, a vacuum cleaner, and a Game Boy Colour that acts like a codex and allows him to search objects, you must help to steer Luigi through the building, sucking up ghosts and alighting rooms while trying to get to the bottom of Mario's disappearance. Later on, different attachments can be fitted to the vacuum that allow it to fire ice, water and fire to trap certain ghosts. *Luigi's Mansion* started as a technical demo for the GameCube, and when work started on expanding it into a full game, its original title was *Mario's Mansion* and starred the more famous of the two siblings. The original design for the game would have had it play out more like a spooky RPG set in a mansion.



EVOLUTION OF LUIGI'S MANSION



Luigi's Mansion

GAMECUBE

A launch game for the GameCube, *Luigi's Mansion* saw Luigi trying to find his brother inside a creepy haunted mansion.

Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon

3DS

Announced back in 2011, this 3DS sequel is being developed by Next Level Games and is said to be more puzzle-oriented than the original.



2001 ANIMAL CROSSING

INSPIRED: ANIMAL CROSSING: SWEET DAY



Animal Crossing can almost be described as the place anthropomorphic videogame characters go to retire. An open-world life simulator, *Animal Crossing* debuted on the N64 in Japan before receiving a global release for GameCube. It currently makes up a series of three games, with a fourth currently in development for the 3DS. All released games follow the same core design, and see you play the role of a newcomer, who you can fully customise, who goes about completing various tasks and jobs for a village's fur and hair-covered denizens. The most interesting aspect of the series is the way in which its world links to ours, achieved through internal clocks inside Nintendo hardware. Day and night cycles and even seasons occur in the game as they would if you were staring outside your window. The other notable thing about the series is its social gaming aspects. *Animal Crossing* allows players to interact and communicate with one another through their games, allowing them to visit each other's villages and leave messages.

EVOLUTION OF ANIMAL CROSSING

Animal Crossing

64-BIT (JAPAN ONLY)

Animal Crossing debuted in Japan on the N64, before being ported to the GameCube and getting released globally.





Animal Crossing

GAMECUBE

Colourful and heart-warming life simulator that simulated seasons and even featured NES games to collect and play.



Animal Crossing: City Life

WII

Using the online functionality of the Wii, this sequel let users visit each other's villages and communicate via voice chat.

2001 PIKMIN

INSPIRED: PIKMIN ADVENTURE



Debuting on GameCube, *Pikmin* is a real-time strategy game that meshes elements of Lemmings – making use of creatures with different abilities – with an art style that recalls Pixar's *A Bug's Life*. You play the role of alien spaceman named Captain Olimar, whose ship crash lands on Earth after colliding with a meteorite. With 30 days until the planet's oxygen fries his brain, Olimar must race to retrieve the scattered parts of his dismantled ship in order to return home. Unable to do this alone, Olimar can find and enlist the help of up to 100 Pikmin, plant-like creatures which he can boss around and direct to attack enemies, pick up objects, overcome obstacles and get around its flora-themed world. Adding some additional challenge to the mix are different coloured Pikmin types whose colours denote specific traits and abilities that are needed in specific situations, bosses to fight and nightfall – as daylight disappears it's crucial that you put away all your Pikmin to ensure they don't get eaten by nocturnal predators. A *Pikmin* sequel was released for the GameCube. It removed the time limit and allowed players to simultaneously command two groups of Pikmin. A third game is currently in the works for Wii U.

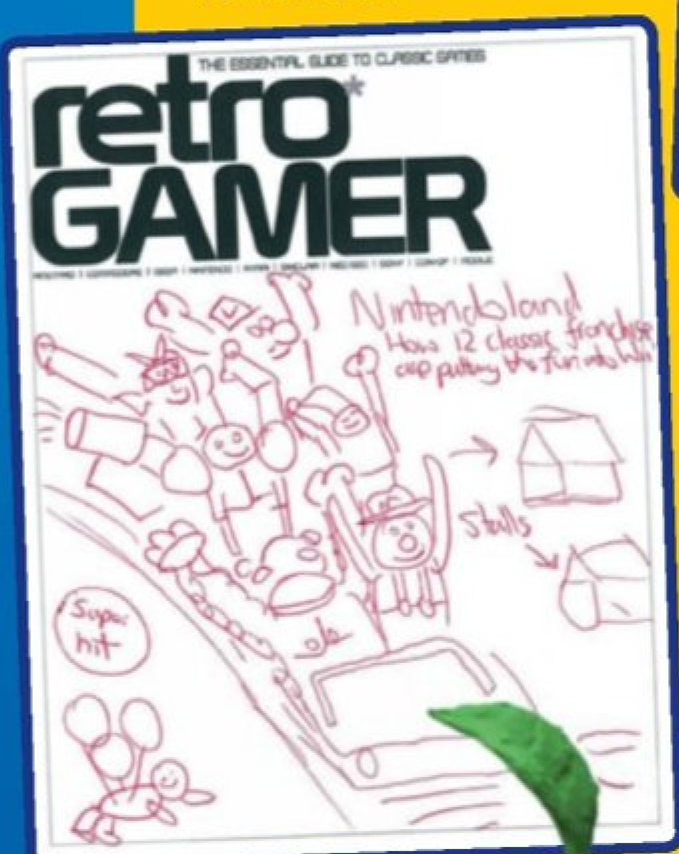
EVOLUTION OF PIKMIN



COVER STORY

Unless you buy your magazines using senses other than sight, you've no doubt seen our stunning Nintendo Land cover this month. Drawn by Wil Overton, Wil explains how he created it

1 First up is the brief which came in the form of this superb sketch from Darran. I [kind of] got the feeling he wasn't that keen on sending it to me but anything is better than having to start completely from scratch.





2 This is the rough sketch I sent back. I tried to keep it pretty much to Darran's sketch but added in the *Nintendo Land* tower thingy and changed the 'stalls' to arches that lead to the game's attractions. You also have to keep in mind that there also needed to be room for cover lines, too.

3 With the rough approved, it's time for the linework. I'm now totally digital, using a program called Manga Studio to do what I used to do with a pencil, brush and ink. Different bits of the picture are on different layers, which makes it easier when you come to do the colouring.





4 Then it's into Photoshop where a press of a button magically transforms it into a full-colour picture! Well, not quite. The technical aspects of colouring in Photoshop aren't that bad but trying to balance all the colours out so they work together can take a while.

5 After feedback from Darran and the crew, in came a rich blue background and a hint of the rest of the rollercoaster. Different parts of the picture are still kept on separate layers so that **Retro Gamer**'s designer can do things like drop parts over the logo, etc. All done!











Pikmin 2

GAMECUBE

Introducing a few new mechanics and ideas, *Pikmin 2* allowed players to control two Pikmin leaders simultaneously. It also removed the 30-day play cycle.

Pikmin

GAMECUBE

Pikmin was a garden-themed strategy title with an onus on puzzle-solving and using the abilities of the different Pikmin.







Pikmin 3

WII

Coming to Wii U, this sequel will introduce new Pikmin types to the mix and allow players to control up to four Pikmin leaders at once.





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THE MUSIC MEN

Since the earliest days of gaming, composers have breathed life into the pixels and polygons on our screens. Speaking to some of gaming's leading composers, Denis Murphy chronicles the evolution of videogame music

One of the most overlooked aspects of videogaming is also one of the most important elements of their creation: the music. Since the early days of our industry, composers have brought life to our favourite titles, yet all the while they have never gained as much recognition as they perhaps should have.

In an attempt to chronicle the evolution of videogame music, we speak to six of the industry's most influential talents regarding the three main eras in videogame music creation, through the 8-bit to 32-bit era, and discover how they each approached these generations. While technology changes regularly, a composer's personal approach, and, most importantly, their passion, remains timeless…

During the era of 8-bit gaming composition, what hardware/software did you utilise?

Rob Hubbard: I only used a 6502 assembler package and did everything with the code and .byte statements. The music was sketched out on paper first before being coded. I used to carry a small Casio keyboard to work out music ideas. The trick was being able to edit music data and synth patch data in real time using a machine code monitor.

Mark Knight: I first started learning the art of computer composition with a second-hand C64 when I was 12, using the Electrosound software. The results were dubious to say the least, but I did the composition part of my GCSE music exam with it.

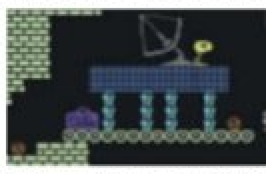
Frank Klepacki: My first title, *DragonStrike* for the NES, was 8-bit, and I had composed the music with the limitations of three monophonic channels and one white noise channel for a drum pattern. I actually wrote it (by hand) on a program called Dr. T on the Amiga, and then exported the midi files to the format for the NES.

Did you ever feel as if the technical limitations at the time held you back?

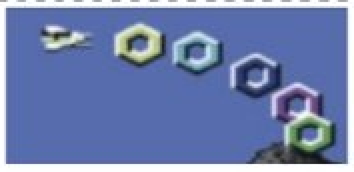
RH: All the time! But you just had to cope with the limitations of the job.



ROB HUBBARD
Age: 57
First title composed: *Thing On A Spring*
Favourite composition: Too many to list here.
Favourite album: Many 20th century classical albums. Many jazz albums.





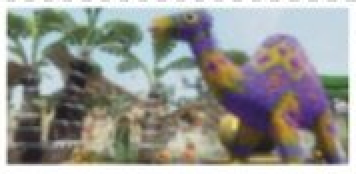




MARK KNIGHT
Age: 39
First title composed: First track: *Guy Spy And The Crystals Of Armageddon* (Amiga), First full game – *Wing Commander* (Amiga)
Favourite composition: *Spellbound* by Rob Hubbard
Favourite album: The first electronic album which lit that spark: *Equinoxe* by Jean Michel Jarre









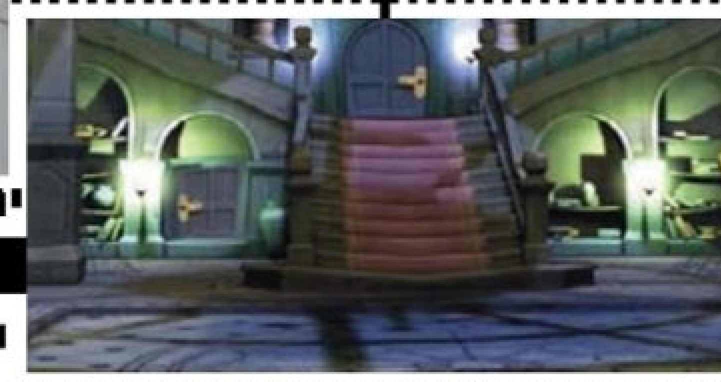


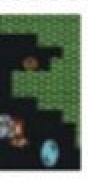


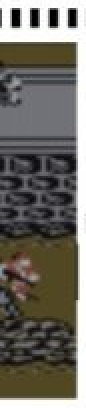
FRANK KLEPACKI
Age: 38
First title composed: *Dragonstrike* (NES)
Favourite composition: Too many to list!
Favourite album: *Infiltrator*







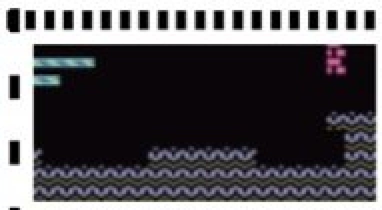


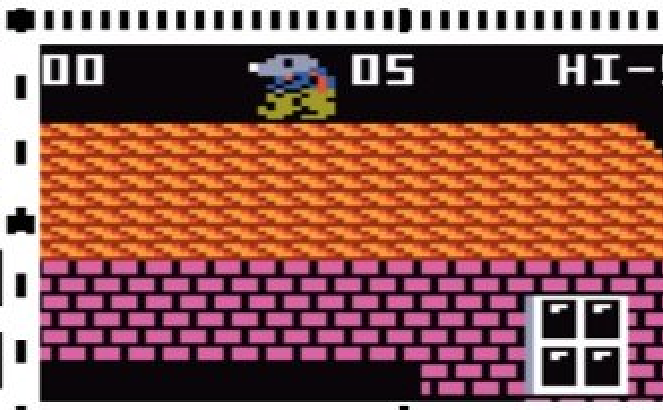




GRANT KIRKHOPE
Age: *cough*
First title composed: *GoldenEye 64*
Favourite composition: *Reunion Of Friends* by John Williams from *Harry Potter And The Chamber of Secrets*
Favourite album: *Rage For Order* by Queensryche











STEPHEN RIPPY
Age: 37
First title composed: *Age Of Empires*
Favourite composition: Danny Elfman's 1989 *Batman* theme.
Favourite album: Take *Sign O' The Times*, *Achtung Baby*, and *Abbey Road* and fuse them all together into some kind of super album, it'd probably be that











STUART DUFFIELD
Age: 40
First title composed: *Alphastorm*
Favourite composition: *Super Mario Kart*
Favourite album: Pink Floyd's *Animals*





MK: Actually I really enjoyed the technical limitations, and embraced them. I think [working within tight boundaries] is what set us aside from traditional music composers – "Write me a piece of music, you have three sound channels and 20 kilobytes of memory to use". Considerably more than if you were writing on a Commodore 64 for example, but still a big limitation.

You made up for lack of channels and memory by writing more memorable melodies, which were enjoyable to listen to. These days, there is too much of a push to make the sounds great, sometimes at the expense of the notes those sounds play.

FK: Of course, but I was also thankful for those limitations at the same time, because it forced me to be more creative with what I had with regard to melody, harmony, bassline, and so on.

How much of a landmark would you consider the SID chip?

RH: I don't think it was a landmark. I was already familiar with real synths like the minimoog. The big difference was the fact that you could do things with it using software – whereas a synth was hardwired. Everything was tied into the 50hz interrupt and that led to many of the software driven effects.

MK: The SID pretty much means everything to me, and is why I currently own three C64's, a SIDStation and a sammichsid (which I've yet to build).

It was hearing *Crazy Comets* on the C64 as a 12-year-old, which blew me away, [and] made me want to write music for games. The sound of the SID has stayed with me ever since, and is why I've been working on my first chiptune album over the last year.

What is your favourite soundtrack from the 8-bit era?

Stephen Rippy: The music for *Ultima III* is an easy choice for an early standout soundtrack. Especially given the limited visuals of the game, the music really set a nice tone that shifted from sort of pleasant and heroic to pretty eerie once you got into the dungeons. It's certainly the only piece of game music that I ever learned how to play, so that says something I guess!

FK: *Super Mario Bros.* is a classic, and is my go-to example to people of the brilliant use of the format. It came down to the strength of the compositions and so it didn't even matter that they sounded blippy.

What improvements did you find were immediately noticeable with the move from 8-bit to 16-bit?

RH: We started to move to samples and FM chips on consoles. And then the transition to CD music.



Rob Hubbard on Commando

■ Phone call midday. Rush to get a train from Newcastle to the Midlands. Arrive 5pm. Pub and food until 10pm. Start work 10.30pm. Work all night. Sound Effects 5am. Everything finished 8am. Back on train 10am.

MK: Well okay, you gained an extra channel or two, and you were able to use sampled instruments a lot more, but were they improvements? Certainly the move to 16-bit and the tracker format made composition much more accessible to people like me who struggled with the more programmer-oriented software on the C64. The style of music being composed changed, in a neither positive nor negative way, it was just different. Reflecting the time/era I guess. But for me, both eras are held close to my heart.

Take us through how you each went about composing your work using this new hardware.

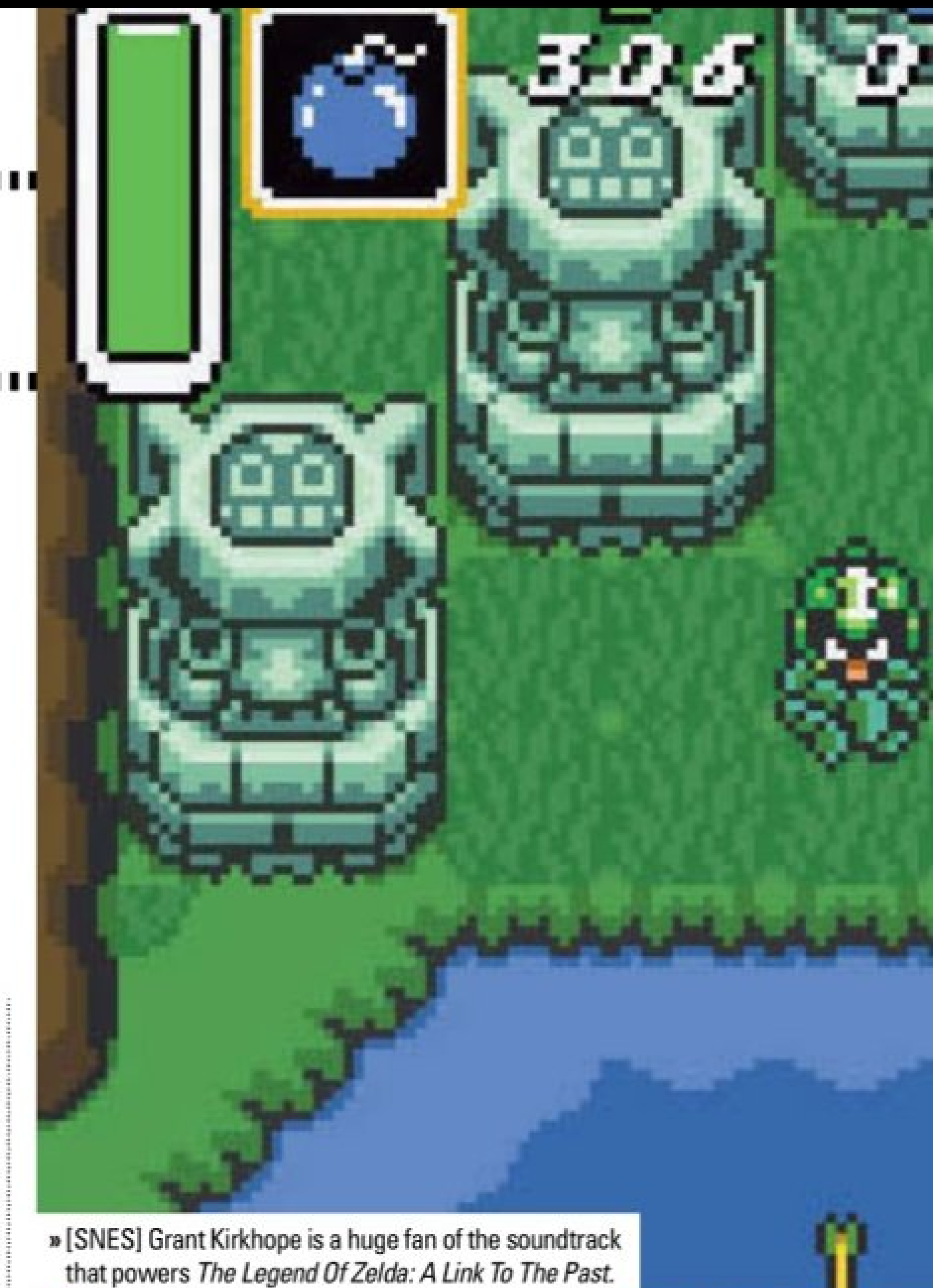
RH: The process of composing never changed. It was always done using manuscript paper and a keyboard. Most of the realisation on the hardware was done with custom software. Later on I did use MIDI and wrote some utilities to aid this, and to aid the ports onto other hardware.

FK: During the 16-bit era, this was mainly on the Sega Genesis and early Adlib/Soundblaster cards for PC. I now had six monophonic channels available to use (the remaining channels were needed for sound effect playback) and I could make program/instrument changes anywhere in the score and not be restricted to the same tempo, I could insert those changes too. So I took advantage of that, and in an effort to keep the scores interesting, would constantly change instruments, sometimes double leads with slight pitch differences as to create a chorusing or phasing effect, even mock up a delay effect by offsetting the same melody on another track simultaneously. The Genesis allowed for a sample playback channel, so if it wasn't being used for sound effects at certain points in the game I'd used it for snare and kick drums samples.

I composed the scores on a program called Adlib's visual composer, as it tied directly to their fm synth instrument editor. Moving up to the Super Nintendo system allowed for all channels to be sampled instruments if you wanted. So we did that for *The Lion King*.

What kind of size restrictions did composing for 16-bit place on the music?

MK: Memory restrictions were the main issue. The flawed *Battletoad* conversion had severe



» [SNES] Grant Kirkhope is a huge fan of the soundtrack that powers *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past.*







Frank Klepacki on End Of Nations

■ *End Of Nations* was one of the best soundtracks I've composed/worked on to date. It's coming out very soon, and so far the closed betas have been received very positively, and people are having a lot of fun with it, which we are very happy about, because we are too! *End Of Nations* is developed by Petroglyph and published by Trion Worlds.





» [Mega Drive] Frank managed a fantastic rendition of *The Lion King* soundtrack.



Grant Kirkhope on Banjo-Kazooie

■ *Banjo-Kazooie* was the first game that I got completely to myself, so I had a lot to prove. That team of people were just the best to work with, we all had that odd sense of humour that surfaced in the game and really felt that it was us against the world. Those days at Rare were truly fantastic and I miss them every day!



Underappreciated Gems

Great soundtracks that don't get the love they deserve



Mercenary Force

By: Unknown composer **System:** Game Boy (8-bit)

■ When the composer cannot be found, you know you are looking at a pretty obscure title. Developed by Meldac in 1990, *Mercenary Force* was a Japanese 2D shooter for the Game Boy. It let you assemble armies, each with their own powers and weapons, and fight with them as a group using various formations. The music in *Mercenary Force* successfully squeezed every drop out of the handheld's music capabilities. Blending high tempo beats with a Japanese feel; *Mercenary Force* stands as a highly accomplished soundtrack that has passed many gamers by.



Skitchin'

By: Jeff Van Dyck **System:** Mega Drive (16-bit)

■ While *Skitchin'* was by no means a title that was under-appreciated, its soundtrack certainly was. Composed by Jeff Van Dyck, who would later work on the *Total War* and *NHL* series, with *Skitchin'* he perfectly replicated the sound of a hard rock band using the limited, yet effective Yamaha YM2612 sound-chip. It was a tall order, but the result is a thrilling, heart-thumping selection of tracks that drive its gameplay forward to great effect. Dyck's composition keeps *Skitchin'* moving at breakneck speed, all while injecting some Nineties attitude into the atmosphere.



Shadow Madness

By: Brad Spear **System:** PlayStation (32-bit)

■ There are many under-appreciated videogame soundtracks, but one that has flown under the radar of most gamers out there is of *Shadow Madness*, a rare PSone title by Craveyard Studios. While the game is little more than a *Final Fantasy VII* clone, the soundtrack is vast, diverse and wholly entertaining. Composed by Brad Spear, the soundtrack of *Shadow Madness* embraces a large array of instruments and styles that effectively gives different locations and regions a unique taste. One of the best examples of compelling music from the PlayStation era.

memory issues, which restricted sound to 30k. Considering the only audio tech we had was sample-based, this severely limited us to the point we could only have music or SFX loaded at any given time.

FK: Well there's the channel limitations I described, even though it was still an improvement from the 8-bit days, but for the SNES in particular we had an 11k buffer to fit our sampled instruments and midi into at any one time during the game. Yes, you read that right… 11k!! Talk about a challenge!

What's the best 16-bit soundtrack?

FK: *Dune Cryo, Street Fighter II, Monkey Island*, gosh the list could go on and on. I appreciated these games for the clever composition and instrument use, but innovation in implementation at the time definitely goes to *Monkey Island*.

Grant Kirkhope: That's easy… *Zelda: A Link To The Past*. It has to be one of the best main themes ever. I also loved the tremolo string effect when you went into a scary dungeon. I don't know how many times I played that game; everything about it was so well done. I also loved the over-the-top boss music, when I came to write my own boss music I definitely remembered my days spent playing *Zelda*!

Where did the use of CDs take videogame music that it hadn't been before?

RH: CDs could store lots of data and coders started to stream music and graphics from the CD. This meant that more musicians could write music and producers could licence bands and artists to promote the games – something that the marketing people love to do. Some people thought this was good and others thought it got away too much from the interactive nature of the products.

MK: CDs ruined videogame music in my opinion. A heck of a lot of people are going to disagree with me on this, but you did ask. CDs opened up game music to a different breed/type of composer. The game music 'style' was often dictated by the limitations of the platform at the time. CD took away these limitations and opened up game music to be absolutely anything.

We've got to a stage now where most game soundtracks are not memorable at all, as they all sound the same. The saving grace is the indie scene, which has opened its arms to music governed by limitations (even if those limitations are fake in reality) and the true style of game music is making a comeback.

GK: Well, it meant that we could have full quality music and sound effects, 44.1Khz 16-bit as opposed to everything being 16Khz 16-



Stephen Rippy on Halo Wars

■ So many tracks are memorable for different reasons. Overall, though, I think I'd have to pick *Halo Wars* [as my favourite]. I think the material has aged pretty well, and it was just such an adventure to record. Bits and pieces were done in Dallas, Seattle, and Prague, and that combined with what felt like a pretty compressed schedule just kind of seared that project into my memory.



» [PC] *Age Of Empires* is the very first soundtrack that Stephen Rippy composed. It's a beauty too, being very atmospheric.

bit or even lower! My first game with this was *Grabbed By The Ghoulies*. I remember getting to use the Vienna Symphonic Library with Gigstudio and being amazed at the quality. I think we did lose a degree of interactivity though; all the channel fade stuff we did in the *Banjo* games was much easier with MIDI.

SR: I think the big benefit was being able to use better sounds. There was, as I remember, a pretty wide range of soundcards when *Age Of Empires* was in development, and the quality of sounds available to use in a MIDI track was hit-or-miss. Streaming music from CD gave us the chance to use much better instruments and, no less importantly, allowed what we recorded to be consistent from machine to machine.

And what do you feel is the best 32-bit soundtrack, then?

SR: I think my picks would be *Grim Fandango* and *The Neverhood*, for the same reasons. They were just both so off the wall compared to other things that were out at the time, and they both offered such rich and complete musical worlds.

Stuart Duffield: The *WipEout* soundtrack certainly springs to mind. I was blown away by that game when it came out and played it everyday, I couldn't get enough! The music was so much a part of the experience; it was like playing a favourite game and listening to a favourite album at the same time. Brilliant.

Over the course of your careers, how have you each personally seen the process of music creation in videogames evolve? What can you identify as being different from when you first started composing?

RH: The music creation process has changed a lot. Early musicians had to be programmers and now they don't. In terms of appreciation and respect – that's a tough question.

Programmers (and graphic artists) used to be well known and regarded as artists, whereas now they are simply one cog in the very large process. I don't think anyone is appreciated like they used to be.

MK: I went through NES, SNES, Amiga, CD32, PlayStation and PC. During this time I think videogame music has gained appeal by the masses of general public (those who didn't appreciate the bleeps and bloops of the 'old days'), and of course things like the internet have helped grown the community of game music followers. As the divide between game and film music has converged there is also greater respect for game composers nowadays, even if quite of few game composers are film composers.

FK: It seemed that every year would be a significant improvement in technology up through the early 2000s. From 8-bit to 16-bit, to 32-bit, midi to mods, streaming wavs, and then invention of MP3, ogg, and other compressed formats that still sounded good and have since become the norm. From fm synthesis to midi playback devices, samples, and full quality audio, from entirely synth created music to full orchestras and everything in between.

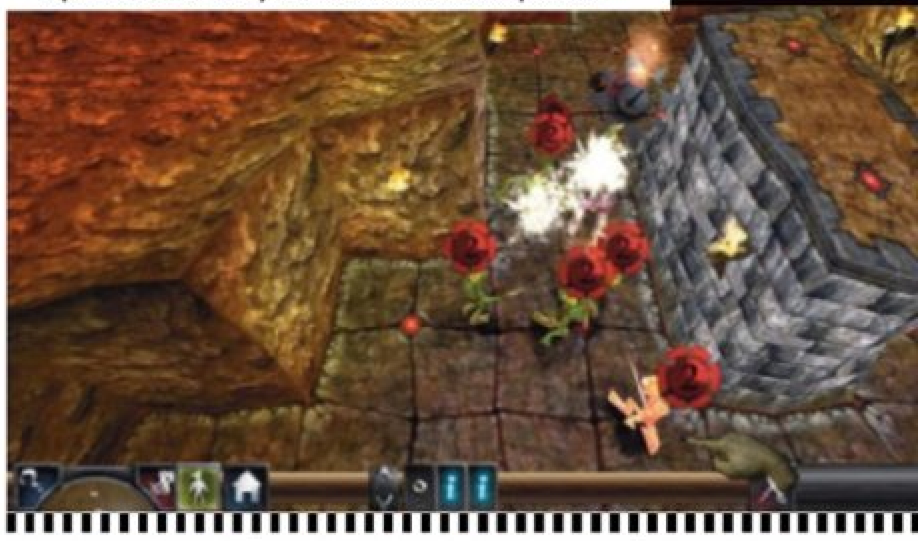
I believe for quite some time now, "game music" is as viable an art-form as anything else and is much more appreciated and respected, and anyone who dismisses it now, thinking it's still like the days of bleeps and blips, clearly has no clue what it's blossomed into in the past three decades.

GK: The fact that we now have full live orchestra in some games, even mobile and Facebook games, is incredible. My one gripe is the fact that I sometimes think that it's very easy to make something sound fantastic with not very much effort because we have access to all the amazing toys that are available these days. I'm a huge believer in melody in music and I just don't seem to hear it as much as I used to. I still believe that people like to hear a tune and be able to remember it.

SR: Wow, even just with the projects I've worked on, there's been a shift from doing soundcard-based MIDI tracks, to CD audio, to the kind of immersive and interactive scores that are the standard now. The music is definitely more noticed and respected now



» [C64] Soundtracks rarely come catchier than Rob Hubbard's superb effort for *Crazy Comets*. Rob did the sequel too.





Stuart Duffield on G-Police:

■ The most memorable title I worked on was *G-Police*. It was a really exciting time in the games industry – the PSone had recently come out, there had been massive leaps forward in terms of technology, and we were getting paid to work on cutting edge games. It was a blast composing to accompany the story, and the visuals were so good that it felt like I was working on a film.

Film to videogame composers

■ Three big Hollywood composer names that have ventured into gaming are Hans Zimmer, Harry Gregson-Williams, and Ramin Djawadi. Zimmer, best known for his work on the *Dark Knight* trilogy, entered the world of videogames with his work on *Muppet Treasure Island* back in 1996, but only truly delivered his trademark sound with his work on *Modern Warfare 2*. Williams brought his pulse pounding style to the world of the PlayStation 2 with the 2001 title, *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*. Finally, Djawadi, who is currently enjoying much praise for his work on the TV series *Game Of Thrones*, created the sound of 2010's *Medal Of Honor*.

This trend of film composers migrating to gaming seems to be growing. In this new dawn of videogame music, an era in which chip-tunes have been replaced with full orchestras, for those composers the line between film and gaming may be finally indistinguishable.





» [Xbox] You can thank Grant Kirkhope for the excellent sound design that appears in Rare's *Grabbed By The Ghoulies*.



» [PC] Mark Knight did the music for three *Harry Potter* games, including *Harry Potter And The Chamber Of Secrets*.

than it ever has been; I think that's pretty clear when you can go see something like the Video Games Live concerts or buy stand-alone soundtrack releases. In an interesting way, the rise of Facebook and mobile games has been a bit of a reset both on expectations and technical limitations for music in games. In my experience, it's been fun to be in that smaller box again, trying to push the edges out a little more each time.

SD: Well, at the start of my career there were established restrictions regarding making music for games. There was a limit to the number of channels you could play at once, or you had to stick to the General MIDI instrument list, or there was a limit to how big your samples could be, etc. This forced you to be creative with what you had available, and also provided a focus because of the limitations. When CDs came along there was suddenly no limits, which was totally liberating. In terms of writing music it was like being set free – you could do whatever you wanted. So there was a shift in approach to creating music because the restrictions had been removed.

In your opinion, what would be the golden age of videogame music, and why this era in particular?

RH: Each decade has its strong points, as the game biz evolved. And of course budgets got bigger and risks got smaller. Today some games use very established expert Hollywood composers, so you could argue that the golden age is today.

MK: The golden age of videogame music for me has to be when the limitations were in place. Whether that was the Eighties with the C64 or later with the SNES and Amiga, I think they all have their place in videogame music history. I personally wasn't a fan of the SNES at all, but who could forget Tim Follin's soundtrack to *Plok* for example.

I get regular emails from people who enjoyed the music I wrote for *Duke Nukem: Total Meltdown*, or *Dungeon Keeper 2*, as examples… and they are indeed pieces of music, but they're not videogame music in my opinion. Soundtrack to a videogame yes, videogame music no.

Let the hate mail begin!

FK: I think we're in it right now! There's so much great stuff out there at the moment – and the bar for quality has never been better. What I think is very cool, is that a real movement in games occurred over the span of my career as myself and a great number of other "game composers" made names for themselves.

It's kind of a badge of honour that we've been there and done it already when it was forming, expanding, and becoming the great thing that it is, and having genuine passion for it other than just collecting a pay cheque.

GK: I'd have to say the N64 era. Things really seemed to begin to take off then with the advent of everything going 3D. I guess I was bound to say that really as that was when Rare was at the top of its game and could seem to do no wrong. It was getting to sound like real music as opposed to a few beeps and blips here and there. The SNES was also a really strong era, and there are so many great soundtracks from those games, and lots of people still love the music from that time, including me.

SD: That's not easy to answer! In fact, I would say that because the industry has grown very big very quickly, we're too close to name just one golden age of game music. In some ways it could be the 8-bit era – because despite all the restrictions there were always fun catchy tunes created for so many memorable games. Likewise, you could say that the 32-bit era is a golden age because it offered real music recordings, licenced music (bands), live orchestra recordings, etc.

SR: Definitely Atari 2600. You get one voice – make it count! And now *Moon Patrol* is stuck in my head…

Future Classic



Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come



INFO

- **Featured System:** Gamecube
- **Year Released:** 2003
- **Publisher:** Capcom
- **Developer:** Capcom Production Studio 4
- **Key People:** Hideki Kamiya (director), Atsushi Inaba (producer), Shinji Mikami (executive producer)

GO DEEPER

- **The game's original title *Red Hot Man* was allegedly changed due to similarities with the Red Hot Chili Peppers band.**
- **Joe's trademark catchphrase 'Henshin a go-go, baby!' translates as 'Transform a go-go, baby!'**



27. VIEWTIFUL JOE

The side scrolling beat-'em-up got contemporised by Capcom, as the pop culture-influenced Viewtiful Joe showed us what the Gamecube was capable of…

THE BACKGROUND

Viewtiful Joe was one of the Capcom Five, an initiative from the Japanese publisher that would bring five games exclusively to the Gamecube. Four would eventually make it, to commercially suicidal results – and *Viewtiful Joe*, from the mind of *Devil May Cry* creator and *Resi 2* director Hideki Kamiya, was developed for the new hardware in 21 months (it was supposed to take 12). This was an experimental time for Capcom, and the game was also viewed internally as a kind of training exercise for a smaller team to improve its skills.

Initially dubbed *Red Hot Man*, with clear inspiration from both Japanese and American superhero archetypal comic book designs, *Viewtiful Joe* was shaped by two emerging early Noughties gaming trends: slow motion and cel-shaded design, yet these features were incorporated in an innovative, stunning fashion. The character of Joe wasn't designed to be a cool guy – he was simply meant to be fun to play.

Kamiya explored the idea of focus-testing the title at one point, presenting it to a group of kids to gauge their interest, but the results turned him against the idea. "They were just trashing the game, so I just got pissed off and said I'm not changing anything," he told 1UP in 2006. For the purposes of this feature, we approached director Kamiya on Twitter to ask how he'd describe the process of making *Viewtiful Joe*. His answer? "Viewtiful."

THE GAME

Even by 2003, slow motion was considered a little passé in game design, since it had been rammed down our throats in a lot of third-person titles with little ingenuity. *Viewtiful Joe* combined the idea with a classic side-scrolling beat-'em-up. Hideki Kamiya's favourite game of all-time is reportedly the original *Castlevania* on NES, and whether he was deliberately referencing that or not, *Viewtiful Joe* felt like a midway point between the classic Konami franchise and

Things of note



Viewtiful Saturation

At one point it seemed like *Viewtiful Joe* was everywhere, with versions on PSP and DS, as well as a total of three instalments on Gamecube. By the end of 2006 it was all gone…



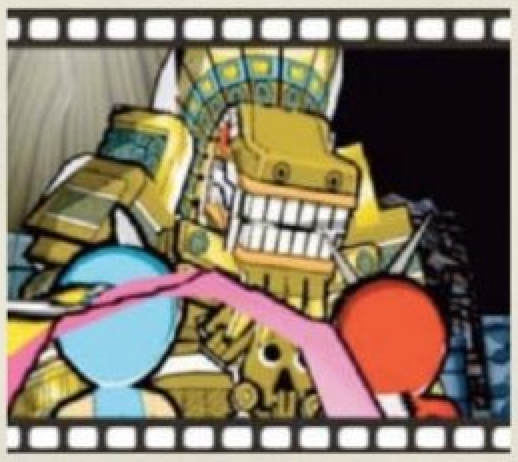
Anime stylings

Despite its lack of overall popularity as a series, *Viewtiful Joe* was translated into anime form. Every episode is available on DVD in the States, and very much keeps the art style intact.



Joe's Dante

In the PS2 version of *Viewtiful Joe*, Kamiya's character Dante is playable, having been redesigned in a chibi (small, often cute) style to fit this universe.



Kamiya's step back

In his tradition of never directing sequels to his own games (though this hasn't always been a deliberate plan), Kamiya didn't oversee *Viewtiful Joe 2*.



Joe Lives On

Last year's *Marvel Vs Capcom 3: Fate Of Two Worlds* featured Joe as a playable character, along with Clover Studios stablemate, Amaterasu, the sun goddess.



» [Gamecube] Proof that art direction is always more important than technology, *Viewtiful Joe* looks like it could've been made today.



» [Gamecube] Never a massive commercial success, the series was most likely killed off by too many instalments coming out too soon.



What the press thought

Game Informer
Score: 9.5/10
"A rare gem that seamlessly blends new-age technologies with gameplay of yesteryear, *Viewtiful Joe* is a stylish brawler that innovates in every field and emerges as one of the most captivating and addictive GameCube titles to date."

gamesTM
Score: 8/10
"*Viewtiful Joe* is a deeply playable and highly enjoyable title that is verging on masterpiece status."





» [Gamecube] Some of the most fun moments of *Viewtiful Joe* iswhen you speed up or slow down parts of the level – using helicopter platforms to reach new heights, or slowing down fire so you can jump through.

scrolling beat-'em-ups, with three key abilities that created a totally new vision of that genre.

Taking place within a film reel, Joe can slow time down, speed it up or zoom into the picture, each of which have different effects on the enemies and the level around you. In the case of slow motion, the most satisfying mechanic in *Viewtiful Joe*, you can boot missiles back at enemies or deliver a powerful beating, while navigating puzzles tailored around this skill, like reducing the speed of spinning fruit machines or dodging incoming deadly objects. It was a fresh take on an idea that most people were sick of – but it's the rhythm of how all these concepts are put together that make *Viewtiful Joe* a masterpiece.

It's a relatively short experience, really, with seven levels that absolutely zip by, yet each offers different ways to challenge the player's strategy so that every last move counts. You learn that the language of *Viewtiful Joe* frequently requires a rethink of your tactics, with each boss battle designed with an almost Kojima-esque level of variety. None of the power-ups or moves in *Viewtiful Joe* offer an easy way out – they're simply tools that have to be re-adapted to the changing nature of the levels. It never reduces to simple button-bashing, because, well, that simply doesn't allow you to survive; the variety of level design is admirably diverse. The same thing is never waiting for you around the next corner, and due to the way the core abilities affect Joe's opponents, you're left with a good spread of powers to take them out in entertaining ways.

Climaxing with a *Star Wars* homage level, so jam-packed with attacking enemies and incoming gunfire that it recalls the later stages of a Cave shooter, *Viewtiful Joe* is familiar at its most basic level, yet is otherwise exploding with creativity across every department. It visually recalls French-style comic books, as well as *Power Rangers*-esque Japanese TV shows, but weaves countless influences together to create a world that feels like a tapestry of geeky pop culture – an unusual approach to visual design, sure, but one that manages to make *Viewtiful Joe* feel as graphically spectacular as its many inspirations.

WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC

If only Capcom still made them like this. This marks a smart balance of retro gameplay and 21st Century presentation, and the innovation of *Viewtiful Joe* comes where the line is drawn between the two. It's a nostalgic beat-'em-up, but uses design touches that are very much of the present day.

The team behind *Viewtiful Joe* would go on to form Clover Studio, the symbol of Capcom's early-mid Noughties design originality. The founding principles of that studio's work can be seen in this game: taking the bare bones of a familiar genre and infusing them with a new, cooler identity, as well as throwing in ideas that revamp the way we think about playing. *Viewtiful Joe* still feels so new when you pick it up, and we don't see that changing any time soon.

REVISITING BULLFROG 25 YEARS ON

"IT'S AMAZING HOW MANY PEOPLE REMEMBER POPULOUS," SAYS BULLFROG FOUNDER PETER MOLYNEUX. "I HAVE TO BEST THAT." DAVID CROOKES TALKS TO EX-EMPLOYEES OF ONE OF BRITAIN'S FINEST DEVELOPMENT HOUSES TO SEE JUST WHAT ELSE MOLYNEUX'S GAMING MECCA HAD TO OFFER

It is clear, from talking to former developers at Bullfrog, just how important a figure Peter Molyneux is. Whether he was trying to get his team motivated to knock out a game in just three months (*Hi-Octane*) or sticking to his guns over design (*Theme Park*), the man arguably best known for *Populous* and *Syndicate* was the driving force of Bullfrog up to his departure in 1997.

But Bullfrog was more than just one man. It was a team of talented individuals who worked well in various teams from an office in Guildford, England, inventing new genres, like the god game and making an indelible impact on games development. It was a Britsoft legend that threw up surprises such as *Theme Hospital* and *Dungeon Keeper*. So join us as we pay tribute to each of Bullfrog's original games.

CLASS OF BULLFROG

The people we tracked down to discuss a gaming legacy



Adrian Moore 1988 - 1989, 1995 -1998
Alex Trowers 1990 - 1998
Ben Deane 1995 - 2001
Ben Board 1997 - 2000
Cathy Campos 1994 - 1997
Gary Carr 1989 - 1993 1995 - 1998
Jon Rennie 1996 to 1999
Jonty Barnes 1990 - 1998
Karl Fitzhugh 1997 - 2007
Mark Healey 1992 - 1995
Mark Jones 1992
Phil McLaughlin 1991 - 1998
Steve Leney 1998 - 2001
Glenn Corpes 1987 - 1999

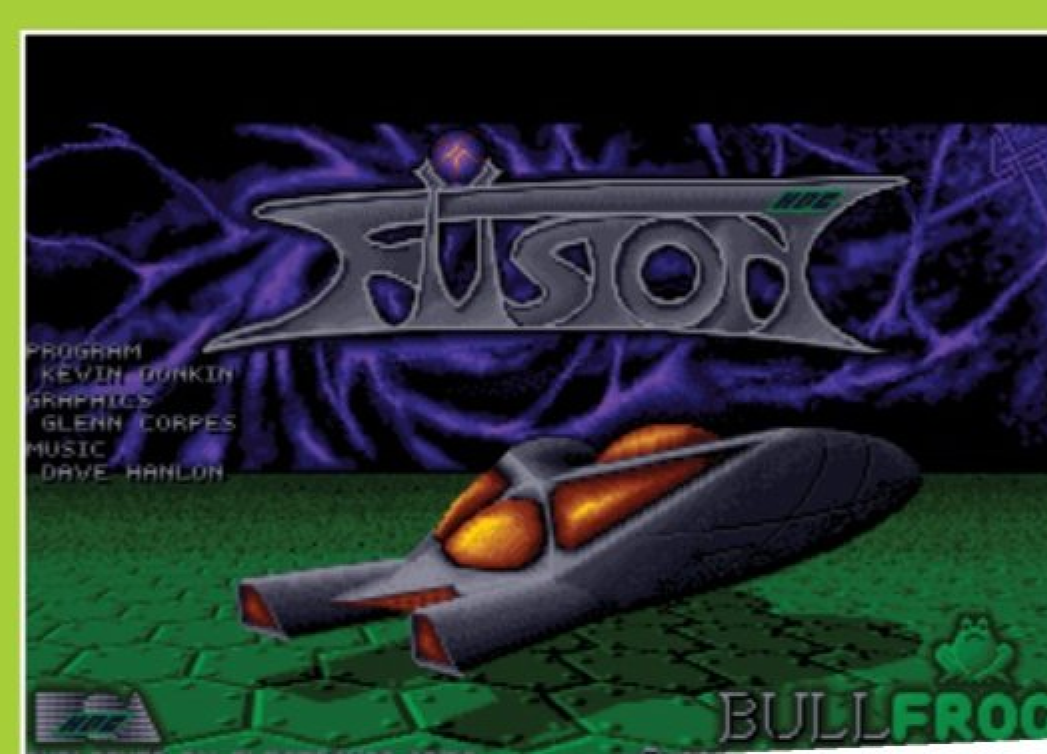
FUSION

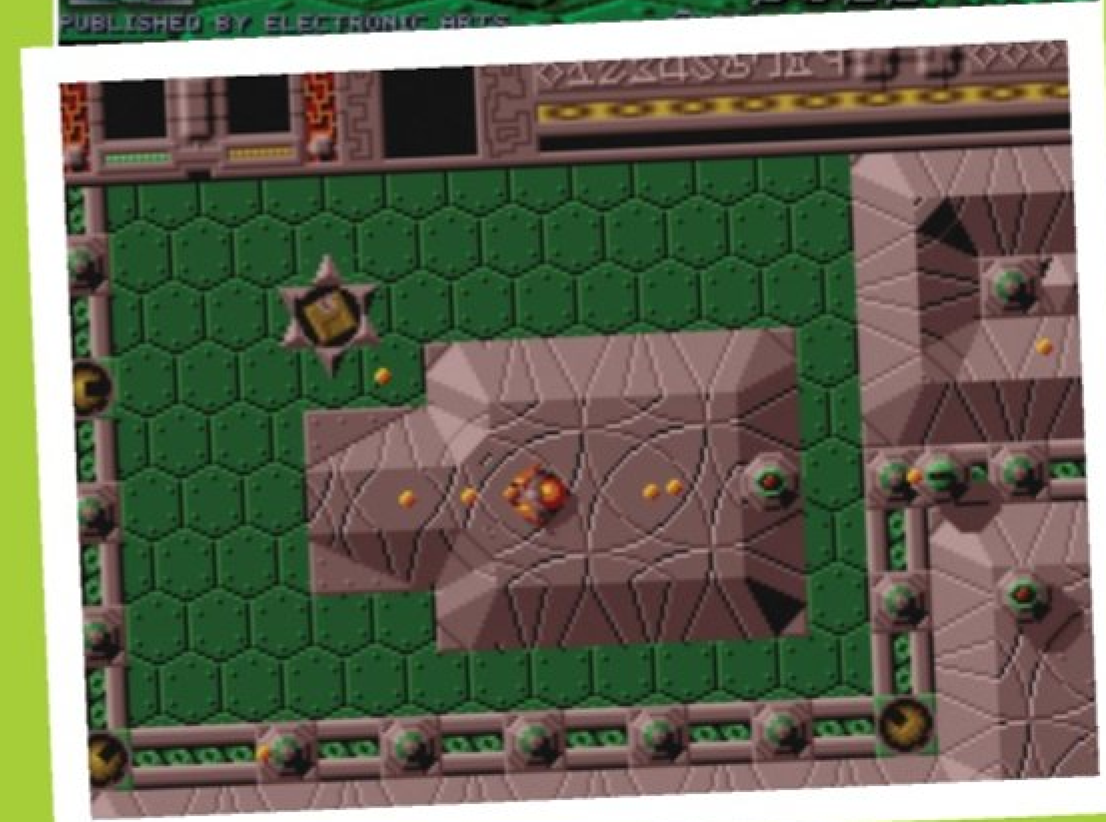
Year Released: 1988
Systems: Atari ST, Amiga
Remembered by: Glenn Corpes, graphic artist



FUSION WAS BULLFROG'S first original game. We'd just ported *Druid II Enlightenment* from the C64 to the Amiga the hard way, by which I mean we didn't look at the source code, we just had a C64 with an old TV next to my desk and we had reproduced it with no reference to the source code. But we learned a lot making it and we wanted to use as much of it as possible on the next game. The idea of a 'big ship' that could fly over some stuff while being too small to fit through other gaps and a 'small ship' that came out of it and make it through narrow gaps feels like it was mine 25 years later. I almost certainly stole the idea from somewhere but, due to advanced age, can't recall where.

The rest of the game was almost all 'borrowed'. The mechanic of flicking switches which changed parts of the map elsewhere was ripped out of *Spindizzy*. The destroyable bad-guy generators were from *Gauntlet*. The repeating pattern parallax scrolling through holes in the landscape was out of the C64 game *Parallax*. The skull-shaped 'big ship' was a slightly adapted version of a floating skull 'boss' bad guy thing I'd drawn for *Druid II*. The maze where you start in the 'small ship' is based on the Hall of Champions from *Dungeon Master*. We later stole *DM*'s palette for *Populous* and its boot loader for the ST versions of *Flood* and *Powermonger*.





POPULOUS

Year Released: 1989
Systems: Acorn Archimedes, Atari ST, Amiga, DOS, PC Engine, Game Boy, NEC PC-9801, SNES, Mega Drive, Master System, Sharp X68000, MAC OS, FM-Towns
Remembered by: Adrian Moore, games designer, audio engineer and musician



BACK THEN, OUR office was on the top floor of a house on Bridge Road in Guildford, above a ground floor hi-fi shop and it was small and basic. The working area comprised of two rooms, and an unclean coffee machine brewed a constant supply of java in a room to one side. I was 15 years old.

During his spare time, Glenn Corpes had created a curious looking engine that allowed the user to click on arrows to move a landscape around within a window. The window only showed a small part of the map. The top page of a book was in the top left, featuring a shrunk-down representation of the map – small in scale so that the entire map could be seen. The landscape was made of grass but with a click on top of each cell the land could be raised and lowered to make mountains, or be removed to reveal an underlying sea level. A series of squares surrounding the landscape window provided areas for buttons, like the arrows.

It really was an oddity, yet very impressive and fun-looking. I don't think anyone anticipated what would happen next. But young Mr Molyneux, still in his twenties, surprised us all. I came in one Saturday morning to find Peter in the office earlier than normal, hunched over his computer, tapping away at his keyboard, cigarette burning down to its filter. He was engrossed and I asked him what he was doing.

'I had an idea, Adrian. Little people are going to breed on this land and spread themselves across it, setting up camp.' I don't recall if these were the exact words he told me but it was along these lines. Before long, Peter had little matchstick figures jumping from cell to cell. It was possible to use Glenn's raising-and-lowering mechanism to take the little people high up into the sky and way down into the sea – with a right and left click of the mouse. Soon enough Peter caused the little people to build their own homes. "'Sprogging' was what happened when a new person emerged from a home, when a new baby was born, and they too went about their business – wandering the land looking for a new place to set up base. It was very captivating and, of course, it proved very popular.





POWERMONGER

Year Released: 1990
Systems: Amiga, Apple Macintosh, Atari ST, PC (DOS), NEC PC-9801, Sega Mega Drive/Genesis, SNES, Sega CD
Remembered by: Jonty Barnes, programmer



I LOVED WORKING on this game. There was a lot more ambition for it originally but Peter was working around the clock to get it done. Peter has always said he wished he had spent more time on it. As a tester on the game, which I was, it was a lot of fun but I was looking at reporting issues. There was a lot of comedy in there with the sheep and a guy called Charles Callet did the audio. I can still remember the bumpity bump music of it all. For me this was a dream job – out of school and testing games and working with inspirational people.



FLOOD

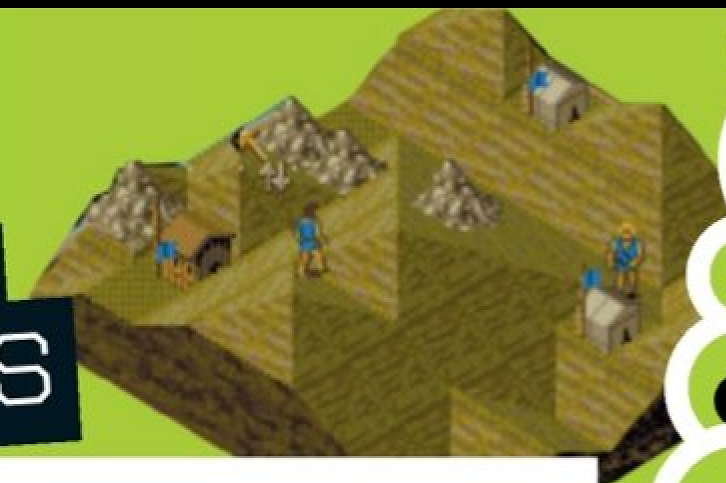
Year Released: 1990
Systems: Amiga, Atari ST
Remembered by: Mark Jones, graphic artist



I LOVED *POPULOUS* and *Powermonger* so I knew quite a bit about Bullfrog's output. I'd also played *Flood*, which was successful on the Amiga and Atari ST and I was looking at producing a follow-up to the game. We put together a design that turned into a sequel and did a lot of work on it, most of it borrowed from all the old 8-bit platform games. A handful of characters were animated, a rough Level One map was produced, and a semi-playable demo was up and running before we submitted our ideas to Bullfrog. Les Edgar, the managing director of Bullfrog confirmed it would consider publishing the game.

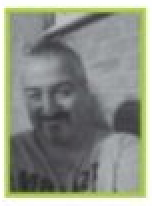
A few days later I met Sean Cooper, and Les told me that everyone had loved the game's design and it had made some of the staff team laugh with our silly ideas and speech bubbles. I was so chuffed! Here I was about to work with one of the most respected 16-bit companies in the business.

Schedules were drawn up, a contract was drafted then re-drafted and we were just about to sign on the dotted line and actually get some money and go full-time on the project when it all fell through. About six months planning had been done and that was it. Game over. It was enough to make me decide to throw in the towel after years of struggling to get by doing bits of freelance work.



POPULOUS II: TRIALS OF THE OLYMPIAN GODS

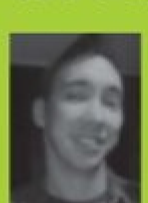
Year Released: 1991
Systems: Amiga, Apple Macintosh, Atari ST, DOS, NEC PC-9801, Mega Drive, SNES, Sega CD
Remembered by: Gary Carr, graphic artist



WORKING ON THIS game was a real privilege. The original *Populous* was completed just before I joined Bullfrog and it was my favourite game then – and still one of my favourite games now. As often happened back then, I had a little freedom at the beginning of projects to put ideas forward. Peter was often busy on promotional tours – at that time it would have been *Powermonger* – so I had some opportunity to try and make a creative impression on the game. In those days, the design part wasn't called out as a job in itself. In fact, in those days, the credits used to say 'designed by Bullfrog'. I remember suggesting the ancient Greece theme and I had a lot to do with what the God effects were. Other than that it was pretty much more of the same really. To be honest, *Populous II* was nothing like as good as the original. I did get to hire a new artist called Paul McLaughlin.

SYNDICATE

Year Released: 1994
Systems: Amiga, Amiga CD32, PC, Mac, Mega Drive, SNES, 3DO, Atari Jaguar, Acorn Archimedes, NEC PC-9801, Mega CD
Remembered by: Alex Trowers, lead designer



SYNDICATE REMAINS THE most fun I've had whilst making a game. It's easily my favourite title and so much of that is down to how much love went into the development. Sean and I would get our friends over to the office on a Friday after the pub and sit there playing it with them. Then we'd all come up with ideas about how to make it better and he'd bang out a new version for us to try. Rinse, repeat. It was a really iterative process and great fun. It was on just such a night that we came up with the Gauss Gun – prior to that, it was going to be a weapon designed to take out electronics. We didn't tell anyone we'd changed it and, in the next gaming session, those of us in the know unleashed hell on the others. The looks on their faces were priceless…

Trivial Fact: Can you think of another title that had a context-sensitive mouse cursor prior to *Syndicate*? I can't.

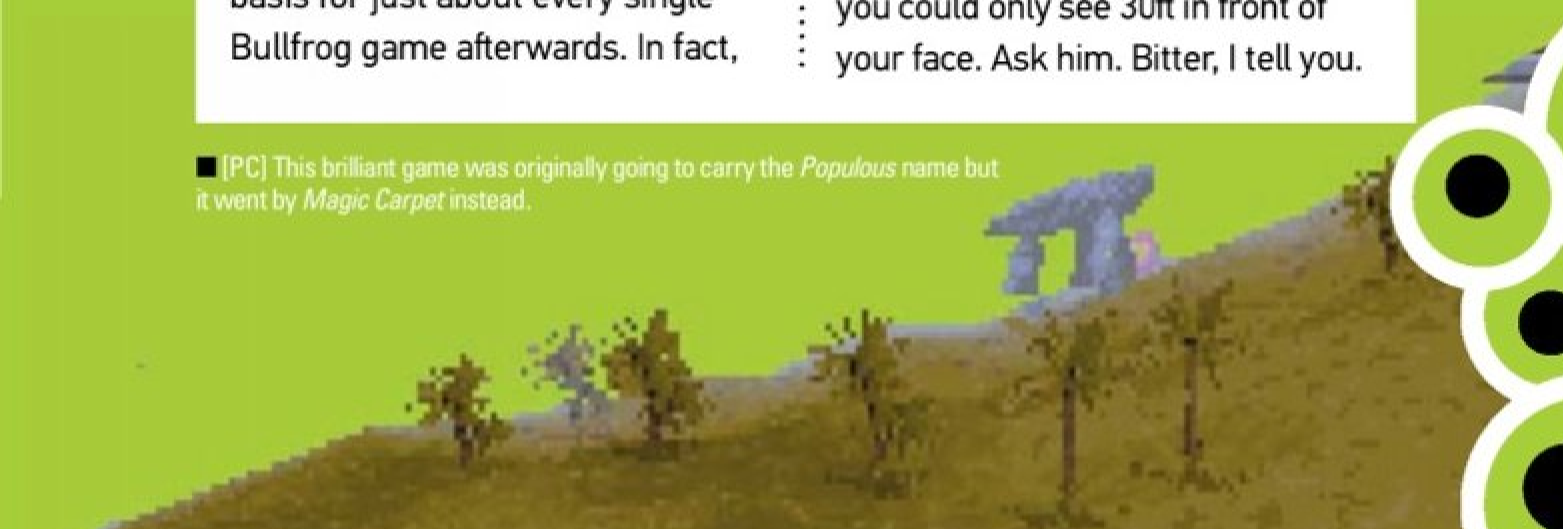
MAGIC CARPET

Year Released: 1994
Systems: PC, Saturn, PlayStation
Remembered by Alex Trowers, lead designer



ORIGINALLY *POPULOUS VILLAGE*, *Magic Carpet* was Glenn's foray into some serious 3D work. To prove how important this engine was, elements of it formed the basis for just about every single Bullfrog game afterwards. In fact, you could argue that with the release of *Topia*, Glenn has pretty much made a career out of re-doing this heightfield tech. Anyhow, the game was originally going to be another *Populous* before Sean got his hands on it and turned it into an all-action shooter.

Trivial Fact: Glenn is still really bitter that the damn artists started turning his ground tiles into buildings, thereby making it look like you could only see 30ft in front of your face. Ask him. Bitter, I tell you.



[PC] This brilliant game was originally going to carry the *Populous* name but it went by *Magic Carpet* instead.

FROG SPAWN

Looking at the companies which formed from Bullfrog



LIONHEAD STUDIOS

AFTER LEAVING BULLFROG Productions in 1997, which was, at this point owned by Electronic Arts, Molyneux went on to form Lionhead Studios. The developer created notable PC franchises including *Black & White* before devising the acclaimed, choice-laden *Fable* RPG franchise and being acquired by Microsoft in 2006.



MUCKY FOOT

SET UP BY ex-Bullfrog developers Mike Diskett, Fin McGechie and Guy Simmons, the new company signed a publishing deal with Eidos almost immediately and the devs went on to produce *Urban Chaos*, *Startopia* and *Blade II*. There were three other games under development when, in 2003, it was announced that the company would close.



MEDIA MOLECULE

SPAWNED FROM LIONHEAD and with a Bullfrog flavour, Media Molecule, which is well known for producing *LittleBigPlanet*, was put together by Mark Healey, Alex Evans, Dave Smith and Kareem Ettouney. As one of the most successful British developers, the company recently announced *Tearaway* for the PS Vita.



INTREPID COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT

FOUNDED BY EX-Bullfrog employees Joe Rider and Matt Chilton, this company was eventually signed up as a first-party developer by Microsoft and it was working on a game called *BC* for the Xbox which was ultimately canned. Intrepid was closed in 2004 and the team moved over to Lionhead.



BIG BLUE BOX STUDIOS

LIKE INTREPID COMPUTER Entertainment, Big Blue Box span off from Lionhead and yet remained very close. It was founded by Simon and Dene Carter as well as Ian Lovett. The three had worked on *Magic Carpet* and *Dungeon Keeper*. They went on to create *Fable* for Lionhead. Such was the closeness of the studios, Big Blue Box and Lionhead merged.



TO THE FUTURE: 22CANS

HAVING DEPARTED LIONHEAD, Peter Molyneux is now heading up a brand new studio called 22cans. Its first game has already been causing something of a major stir and much of it is to do with a rather large sum of cash.

The idea of *Curiosity: What's Inside The Cube?* is that players are put in a virtual room and asked to chip away at a large cube. Players will be able to see each others' contributions as shards are shed, and the cube will eventually reveal "something truly amazing, absolutely unique," Molyneux says. The DLC comes in the form of different tools with a ten times more effective chisel costing 59p while the most expensive will offer 100,000 times more power.

Molyneux has already branded the amount of cash "insane" but he adds: "This is not a money-making exercise; it is a test about the psychology of monetisation." He says 22cans will track how the game is received and discussed. The life-changing experience in the middle of the cube will only be seen by one person.

THEME PARK

Year Released: 1994
Systems: 3DO, Amiga, Amiga CD32, Mega Drive, PlayStation, Saturn, SNES, Atari Jaguar, PC, Mac, Mega CD, NDS
Remembered by: Gary Carr, graphic artist



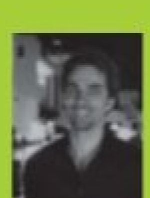
THIS IS A BIT of a running joke. Peter and I often tease one another about it. I worked on the game for about a year. I just didn't get it. I thought it was a dreadful idea. I hated the art style. Peter asked me to create something really colourful, he wanted the characters to be simplistic with large heads. We hadn't had a big hit in Japan since *Populous* and he thought this style of artwork, as well as the design, would appeal to a Japanese market. I thought he had lost the plot, so in a fit of youthful exuberance, I left Bullfrog to make a decent game. What a dickhead! *Theme Park* is an absolute classic, a game well before its time. It is 20 years old now and my kids love playing the latest version on iOS.



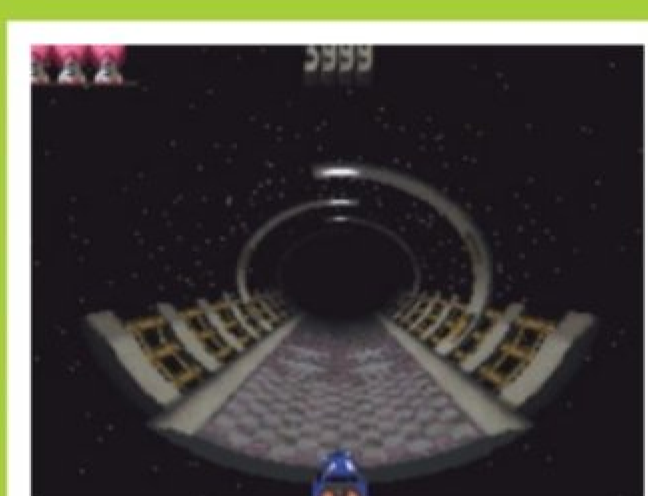


TUBE

Year Released: 1994
Systems: Amiga, PC
Remembered by: Jonty Barnes, programmer



TUBE WAS A coverdisk project that I did with Glenn Corpes. Glenn had come up with a graphics renderer to wrap a map around a tube and there was a lot of inspiration around Jeff Minter's *Tempest* game. There was talk about whether or not we could come up with a take on something like that with Glenn's technology. I was learning programming at the time and Peter tasked me with coming up with a minigame that could become something for a magazine with a view to making it more complicated long term. It was a programming and learning time gone well. I remember Peter asking me if I wanted to spend more time on it and make it more awesome or work with a team on another game and I absolutely wanted to work on the other stuff.



■ [PC] *Tube* was an experimental project but it ended up getting a coverdisk release.

HI OCTANE

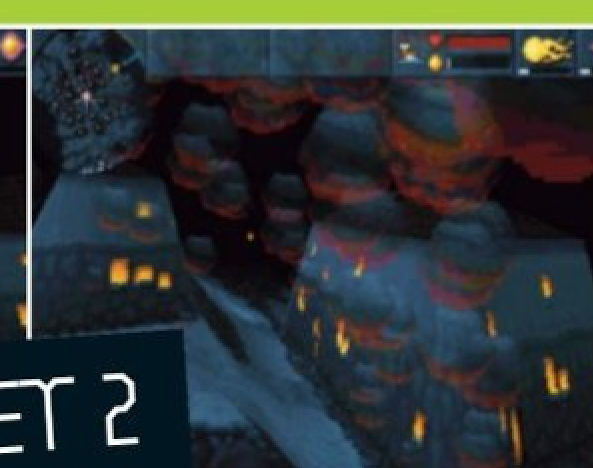
Year Released: 1995
Systems: PC, PlayStation, Saturn
Remembered by: Alex Trowers lead designer



HI OCTANE NEVER had the press (or review scores) of the others and it is never regarded as one of the classics. We made the game in seven weeks – concept to shelf. That's pretty incredible, even by today's standards. It was a really fun multiplayer game with some interesting handling that sadly got toned right down before release. Unfortunately, as well as being rushed, it also came out at the same time as *WipEout* and there was only really going to be one winner of that battle. As a trivial fact, regardless of what you might think or see on the stats screen, every vehicle in the game was identical. Handling, speed, collision volumes – exactly the same. Whilst this was purely due to the time constraint and sorted out any balancing issues, it speaks volumes about what people perceive.







MAGIC CARPET 2

Year Released: 1995
Systems: PC
Remembered by: Jon Rennie, level designer, game tester and documentation writer



IT'S INTERESTING TO remember what was in the original demos and what ended up in the final game. The first demo for *Populous: The Beginning* was just a raw landscape with a giant cross and lots of identical followers, It used a massively enhanced *Magic Carpet 2* engine which was developed by the same core team. I think what I remember best about Bullfrog was the people and the teams I was a part of. The games were always fun and interesting to work on but the crew made it a family experience. The company grew massively after its takeover by EA but it never really lost its anarchic spirit, although increasing involvement by its overlord owners chipped away at the edges. Sadly, this growth also created a lack of focus that meant that too many games failed to develop properly and were cancelled. I remember seeing game engines years ahead of the competition that rendered without GPU. We were developing *Theme Resort* so that you weren't limited by a grid-building system, for instance.



THE PR PERSPECTIVE

Cathy Campos, PR manager

I started at Bullfrog just as *Theme Park* was finishing, and we then moved on to *Magic Carpet* which threw me right in at the deep end. But I must have done okay as I won 'Fire-fighter of the Year' at that year's Christmas Party! Bullfrog was jam-packed with passionate, creative people, and of course we were independent then, so could do what we liked, which helped enormously. I look back on my days at Bullfrog with great fondness. It was a very happy time, but like all these things was very much of the moment. You couldn't re-create it now. It is of course where I first worked with Peter Molyneux and we did have lots of laughs and the odd disagreement – I still work with or am in touch with many of the Bullfrog guys (there really were no other female devs there at that time). Sometimes we bump into each other at, say, Develop for example, and talk about having a Bullfrog reunion.

GENE WARS

Year Released: 1996
Systems: PC
Remembered by: Alex Trowers, lead designer



ANOTHER OFTEN-OVERLOOKED title, *Gene Wars* started out as a planetary terraforming game. You'd hire a bunch of specialists and travel to their target planets with a brief to turn them into whatever the customer wanted. Much hilarity would ensue as you struggled to give the flora a foothold and prevent the fauna from generally messing everything else up. It went through many different iterations before finally ending up as a fairly standard RTS albeit with an interesting art style and unit construction/management system.

I must also take this opportunity to big up the late, great Richard Reed – project leader and designer of the original game titled *Biosphere*. He was a complete joy to work with, supremely talented and one of the nicest people you could ever hope to meet. During what was a relentless development schedule featuring under-desk sleeping, the only thing that kept us sane was a *Time Pilot '84* arcade machine.



[PC] Gene Wars was perfect proof that Bullfrog was always happy to try out new ideas. It's development was fuelled by *Time Pilot '84* sessions.



SYNDICATE WARS

Year Released: 1996
Systems: PC, PlayStation
Remembered by: Ben Deane, software engineer



SYNDICATE WARS WAS my first game and I was one of the two support programmers. Our team was small, talented, subversive, and tightly knit. We worked long hours, of course – we were young and project management wasn't really anyone's strong suit at the time. I can remember a few crazy things that happened along the way. My first task was working on the level editor, an arcane beast that was actually one and the same program as the game, just in a different mode (actually, about six other different modes). It had grown organically and almost every key on the keyboard had some use. There were a few idiosyncratic error messages in there – one level designer was particularly prone to triggering an error in texturing objects and provoked Mike (the lead programmer) to write the error message 'Don't do that, Barry' in response.

DUNGEON KEEPER

Year Released: 1997
System: PC
Remembered by: Mark Healey, graphic artist



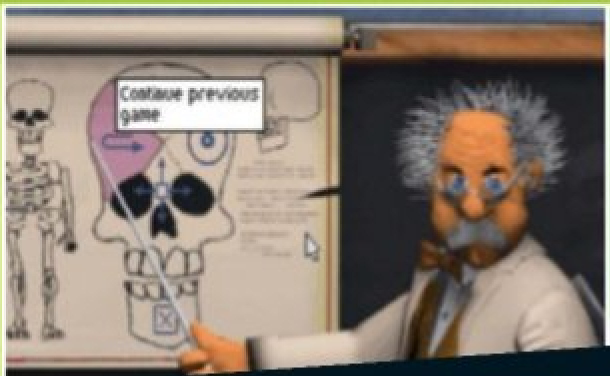
I REMEMBER BEING the only artist on this for most of the project, and in fact ended up doing 90 per cent of all the game's graphics – I worked many many late nights, which ruined my relationship at the time, and also ruined my spine – back pain is in fact the most memorable thing about this period of my life

Peter decided he was going to leave Bullfrog after it was finished, which must have really got on EA's nerves and they decided to ban him from the office so I, along with the Carter Brothers and Jonty Barnes moved office to Peter's house, and for much of the project it was just us.

I particularly remember near the end when I had finished my last pixel, I made a point of giving a massive sigh of relief, putting my feet up, and making sure everybody knew I was finished (Peter and the others were stressed trying to finish their bits). I then picked up a newspaper and started to read Peter's horoscope aloud. Of course I made up something to make it sound like he was doomed, which made Peter flip out. He got very angry and threw something at me, it might have been a dodgy fax machine that had been tormenting him for months. Whatever it was, he missed and I just laughed.









THEME HOSPITAL

Year Released: 1997
Systems: PC, PlayStation
Remembered by: Jon Rennie, level designer, game tester and documentation writer



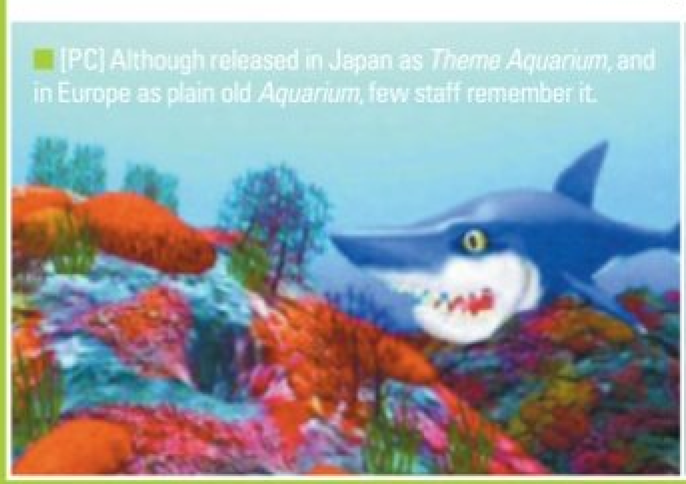
THEME HOSPITAL WAS great fun to work on, particularly as it was building on the success of *Theme Park*. The team was together for over two years and everyone was a great fan of the original. Mark Webley and Peter Molyneux were really keen to help players get straight into the game without a lengthy tutorial as many games can be overcomplicated or rely on an extensive manual, something that was a problem for *Dungeon Keeper*. It worked well. For me, it's a classic because it gave people the freedom to play while also pressuring them into making decisions before they became too comfortable. The game made sure there were always multiple ways of playing but never a perfect solution.

THEME AQUARIUM

Year Released: 1998
Systems: PC, PlayStation
Remembered (sort of) by: Jonty Barnes, programmer

AMAZINGLY, DESPITE SPEAKING to 14 different members of Bullfrog, the clearest memory any of them had was this: "I do recall there being a fish game of sorts in which you controlled an aquarium. Some strange game that let you create an attraction but although I remember seeing it playing, it was one of those obscure titles which doesn't really sit at the forefront of my memory."

The little we do know about it was that it was intended for a Japanese-only release for Sony's Playstation, before EA released an English version on PC. It was also renamed Aquarium. *If any other developers do remember this game we'd love to hear from you.*




[PC] Although released in Japan as *Theme Aquarium*, and in Europe as plain old *Aquarium*, few staff remember it.

POPULOUS: THE BEGINNING

Year Released: 1998
Systems: PC, PlayStation
Remembered by: Phil McLaughlin, graphic artist, Steve Leney, graphic artist

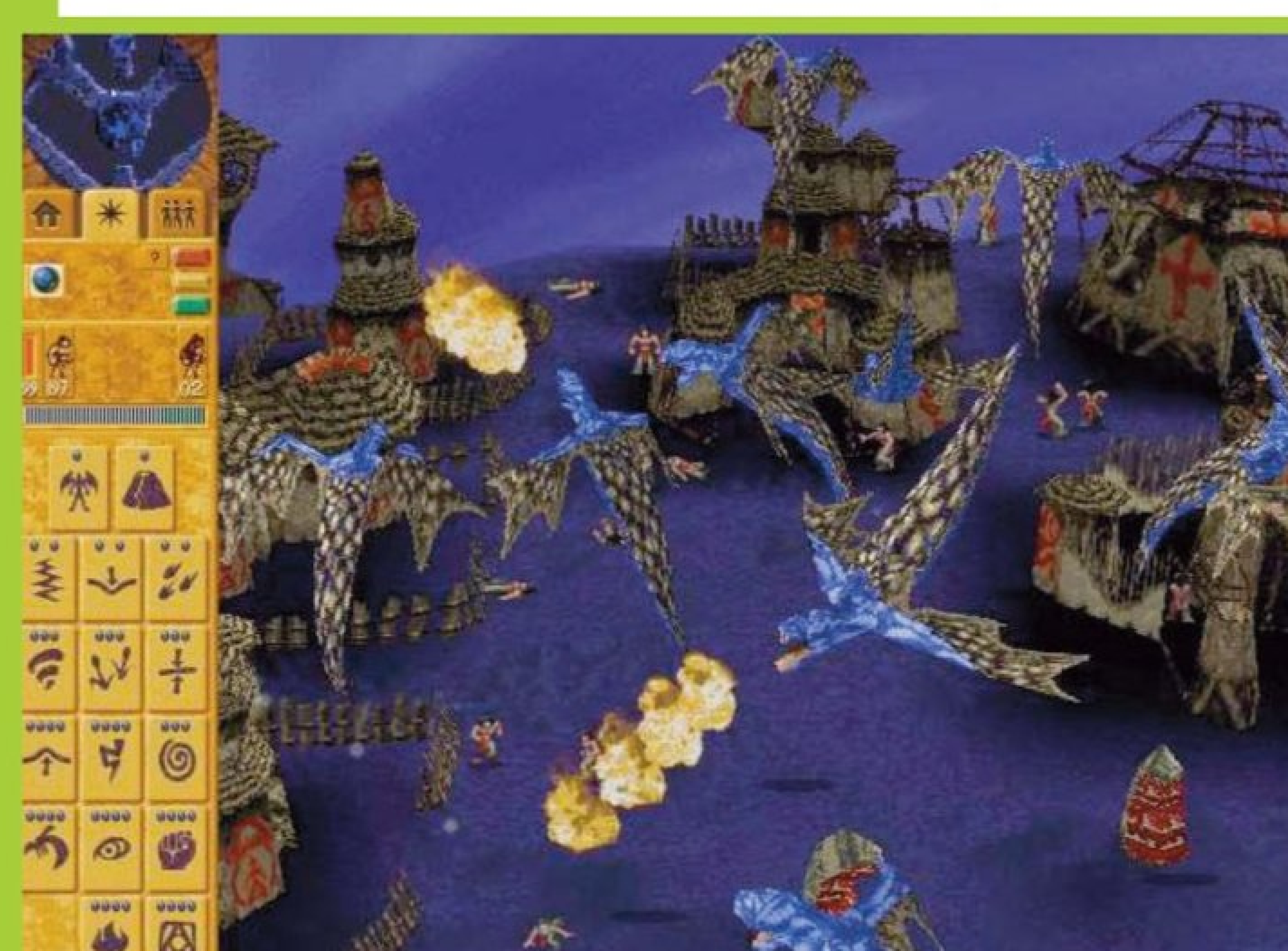
Phil McLaughlin

I WAS HEAD of art for Bullfrog and, I think, the lead artist on this game although that might have been Mark Pitcher, roles weren't so clear cut in those days. The architecture (and civilisation) were based on a combination of African, North American and Celtic influences. I wanted them to be primitive looking but familiar too, so Earth based rather than alien fantasy or anything. Of course they had to be made from about 20 polygons or something so the lofty concept didn't amount to that much in reality.

The approach to texturing of the world was very unique and innovative. IIRC various texture types were assigned automatically to various altitudes in the map and blended together using masks. It allowed me to get a lot of colour and variety into the landscape (and skies) easily and as it was very much a procedural approach it threw up all sorts of cool unexpected results without tedious intervention on my part. Of course *Populous* is all about the population and Mark Pitcher (now at Zynga) did a great job designing and creating all the character sprites. I have very fond memories of the project, the team and the results.

Steve Leney

AT THE TIME, the Guildford EA/Bullfrog studio wasn't particularly good at making box art. There was usually a bit of friction between the devs and marketing about how the cover should look, with the artists always declaring that they could do a better job. However, I think the *Populous* box art was lovely, despite not really conveying the tribal feel of the game. EA even commissioned a film-style poster of the game, which was beautiful. I guess it was intended to be used in Japan to promote the game. I don't think anyone in the UK (outside of the Guildford studio) ever saw it but I kept it with me and stuck it to my wall for the next few years as I travelled from project to project. I might still have it in my loft – I must have a look.





THEME PARK WORLD

Year Released: 1999
Systems: PC, Mac, PlayStation, PlayStation 2
Remembered by: Ben Board, programmer

THIS WAS MY first released game. I wrote all the visitor AI – whenever the little peeps are walking around, that's me. The piece de resistance was the queuing behaviour. I spent ages trying to make it look interesting when the guys were standing in long queues. The notable thing about the project was that most of the team were ex-Mindscape. The team got brought in wholesale to Bullfrog (they may have been bought by EA, can't remember) to finish a game called *Dark Omen*. They were all mates with each other, so it was all a bit uncomfortable and them-and-us for a while. They finished that and had nothing else to do. We had been working on *Theme Resort*, a cool holiday island *Theme* game, for a while, but that was killed and our small team joined the Mindscapers to make *Theme Park 2*. That became one of the most important and successful titles the studio made around that time. It's done something like three million plus copies, and you can find it on shelves even now. It was great!

DUNGEON KEEPER 2

Year Released: 1999
Systems: PC
Remembered by: Jonty Barnes, programmer



I'D WORKED ON the first game but not on the second. The first had been an amazing situation which had gone through a few iterations and it had brought on cabin fever because we were in a development room above a garage for weeks on end. I thought the sequel was beautiful and there was a lot I liked about it. For me, working on new IP was better, but there were some amazing people on this. We were moving to 3D at this point and games were becoming more and more wonderful.



THEME PARK INC.

Year Released: 2001
Systems: PC
Remembered by: Karl Fitzhugh, president of third party dev Climax



BY THE TIME *Theme Park Inc.* was in development, the Bullfrog teams had been almost entirely absorbed into EA's UK Studio and development was largely handled by an external company, with a few *TPW* staffers in key positions. In all honesty it was a much harder process, with many of the *TPW* team no longer on the project. Even so, it's a worthy, if less revolutionary, follow-up that added a more structured goal-based 'career', a much larger number of rollercoasters, and the ability to share coasters you created with other players.



A CHAT WITH PETER MOLYNEUX

AS THE UNDOUBTED face of Bullfrog and the driving force behind most of the game produced by the developer, Peter Molyneux remains one of gaming's star names. It was not his first company – the database developer, Taurus, has that accolade. But the Southampton University computer science graduate always had a yearning to make games. He set up Bullfrog for that purpose and the first original release was *Fusion*.

Peter's major contribution to Bullfrog was ideas. "I'm the ideas man, which is the easy part," he says, modestly. He puts a great emphasis on his team back then. "It's the implementation of those ideas which is the hard part. I am incredibly proud of the people I've worked with."

He looks back on Bullfrog with very fond memories. "It was an amazing time. There was Glenn and I working on *Populous* together and then taking on a chap called Sean Cooper who was on a YTS scheme. He was amazing. He was just someone who just said: "Why don't we do this?" He just worked like a dog and he just made it happen."

It is clear Peter is still enthused about his time. "We did a game called *Powermonger*. That was an insane time as well. The team had laughed at me because I used a high level language to create it but I then went back and rewrote the whole thing in assembly so that they wouldn't laugh at it any more. And then we went on and did *Theme Park* and *Magic Carpet*, and while all that was going on there were these crazy offers coming from all sorts of companies to buy us. It was just an amazing, incredible time. We started in this horrible little office and we were just all incredibly passionate gamers. It was an incredible experience."

Although he worked on some amazing games in his time at Bullfrog, he does admit to having made mistakes, which he regrets. "Refusing to do sequels to games like *Syndicate* and *Populous* through an idiotic belief that it would be creatively stifling is one," he says. "Not taking the time to finish games properly – *Powermonger* springs to mind – is another."

He also says he regrets leaving EA under a cloud after it purchased Bullfrog and not recognising that some of his games had too many features. "That said, it's been an amazing joyful rollercoaster which I wouldn't have traded for anything," he adds. "It was an obsession. We were just obsessed with doing stuff that other people hadn't done before. It was working very late and very hard and smoking lots of cigarettes and eating lots of pizzas and bringing together some crazy insane people. We just had the reason to do stuff. There wasn't a process involved. We didn't have producers. We just played games that we ended up playing a lot, and that was incredible. There were some brutally tough times there, but it was amazing."



THE MAKING OF

Baldur's Gate™



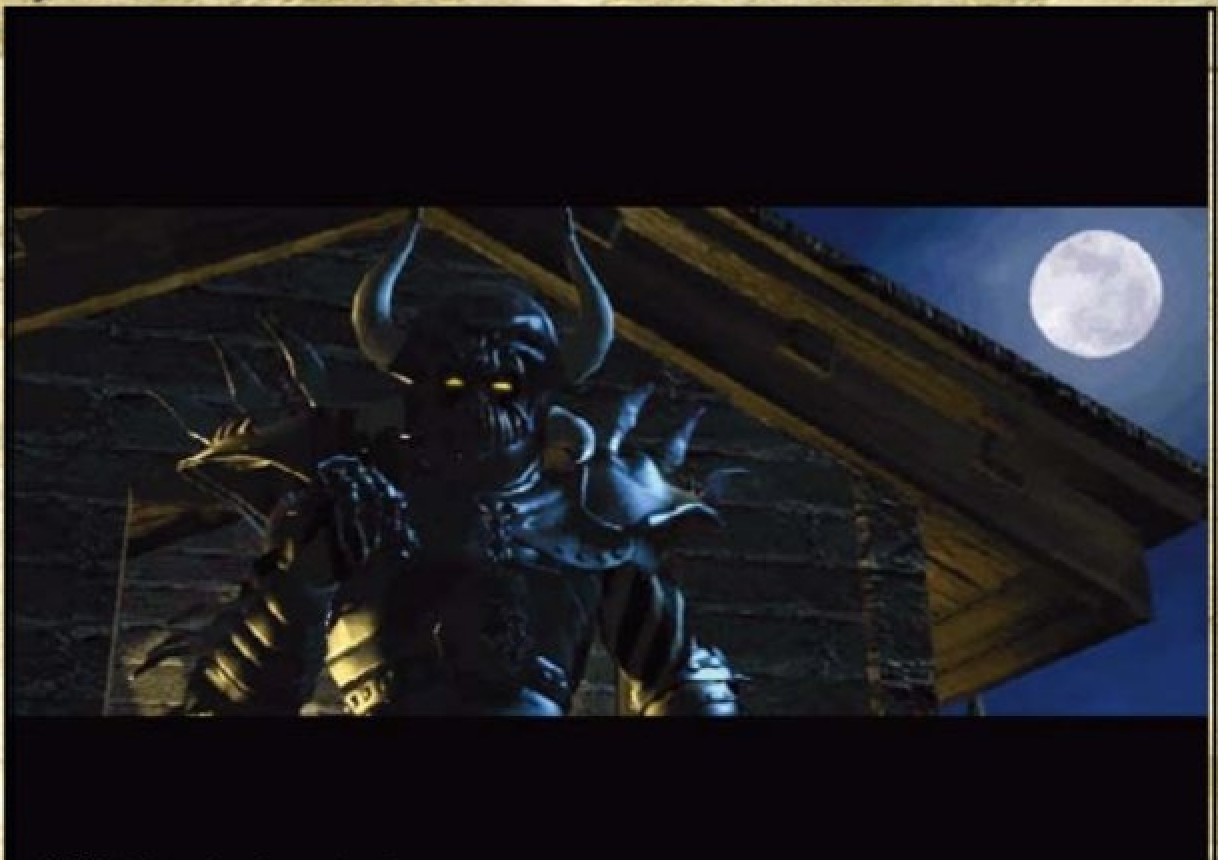
The FPS had all but dominated PC gaming in the Nineties, with shotguns overshadowing magic missiles, and cacodemons replacing long-forgotten kobolds. But in 1998 one title managed to keep the beardies from pulling out their character sheets and dusting off their d20s. The game was Baldur's Gate. Craig Ritchie picks the brains of the crew who made it happen

While 1996's *Diablo* appealed to action junkies with no respect for their mice, fans of more traditional computer RPGs experienced a severe drought of classic fantasy fare for much of the decade. Thankfully, *Fallout* came along late in 1997 and proved that not only were PCs a great system for roleplaying, but the stat-loving, virtual-dice-rolling public was more than ready for its next RPG epic. Despite its popularity and what it did to reinvigorate role-playing on home computers, post-nuclear was not everyone's cup of irradiated tea, and gamers were clamouring for a return to *Dungeons & Dragons*. Right then, a fledgling Canadian developer named BioWare were kicking off a project that would answer this call.

The company had released their first title in 1996; a mech combat sim called *Shattered Steel*, and were aiming to go real-time strategy for their next game.

"*Battleground Infinity* was going to be about Ragnarok, the Norse end of days," says Trent Oster, who worked as a modeller on the original *Baldur's Gate* and is now heading up development of *Baldur's Gate: Enhanced Edition*. "It was to be a game about all the ancient deities at war. The storyline never really got much development as the early focus was on building a technology prototype, which was hacked together out of a Direct Draw sample app. A rough demo was built showing off the big features (16-bit colour and all unique area art). The *Battleground Infinity* demo was sent around to many of the major publishers of the day and they all were not interested. Our producer at Interplay on *Shattered Steel*, one Feargus Urquhart heard about the demo and asked to see it."

During *Shattered Steel*'s production, Urquhart was promoted to division head for Interplay's newly created TSR Division, which would eventually be named Black Isle Studios.



» [PC] He's just misunderstood, really…

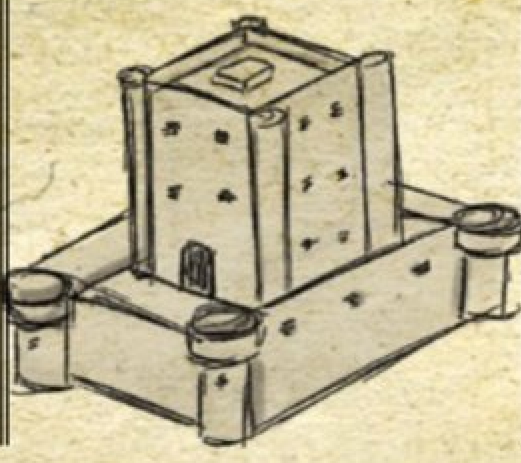
"As *Shattered Steel* was completing," recalls Chris Parker, Black Isle Studios' producer on *Baldur's Gate* and currently project director for *South Park: The Stick of Truth* at Obsidian, "Feargus, Ray and Greg got together to talk about upcoming possibilities and they had a chocolate-and-peanut-butter moment: Feargus had the *D&D* licence and BioWare had an RTS-style RPG. The title was signed soon afterwards as *Forgotten Realms RPG* and would eventually become *Baldur's Gate*."

"Since everyone at BioWare was a total *D&D* fanboy at the time, the team jumped on the chance," adds Trent. "Our licensing rep at TSR, a fellow named Jim Bishop hooked us up huge with source material. At one point I think James [Ohlen] had every 2nd Edition book in his office." James, who was lead designer on *Baldur's Gate*, had been running a pen and paper campaign set on the Sword Coast and it was an easy choice to use the titular city as the setting for the computer game.



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** BLACK ISLE STUDIOS
- » **DEVELOPER:** BIOWARE
- » **RELEASED:** 1998
- » **PLATFORM:** PC, MAC
- » **GENRE:** RPG
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** $9.99 (£6.20)



"This was mainly because Baldur's Gate was underdeveloped – no novels, game modules or much at all," explains James, who is still with BioWare and now in the role of game director for *Star Wars: The Old Republic*. "RPGs are about allowing the player's created character to be the hero of the story. When working within an established universe, you don't want to set an RPG in a place that is already the focus of movies/TV/novels, because then you'll have significant restrictions. Those restrictions make it difficult to tell an epic story where the player's actions can have a significant impact."

With a solid licence secured and campaign setting in hand, the small but steadily growing team at BioWare got to work completing the transformation of their prototype RTS technology into an isometric role-playing game, aiming high from the get-go.

"From the outset the *BG* games were intended to be the next-generation of the venerated Gold Box games," says Chris. "At the same time, the RTS genre was proving what you could do strategically in a real-time environment. It seemed like a natural idea to marry the real-time strategy of RTS games with the depth and party-based play of past-gen RPGs – and of course, it worked out very well once we figured out pausing with the spacebar."

It was a transition that flowed perfectly: *Battleground Infinity* was no more – and the Infinity Engine was born. The addition of pausing mid-combat allowed the player to issue commands to party members in the heat of battle without the timing pressure present in an RTS. This included managing spell books, quaffing healing potions or getting your injured frontliner the hell out of the fray so they could change from melee to ranged weapons. It was a simple feature, but central to the Infinity Engine, and the same technology would ▶

> Since everyone at BioWare was a total D&D fanboy at the time, the team jumped on the chance



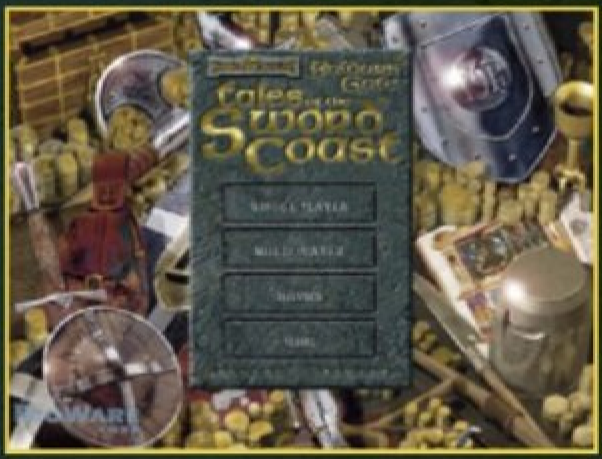
» [PC] Books provided detailed history and *Forgotten Realms* lore.



» [PC] Party banter added depth and drove subplots along.

PLAY IT AGAIN, EVEN BETTER

BALDUR'S GATE: ENHANCED Edition is now in the finishing stages of development and will offer fans new characters, locations, quests and over 400 improvements to the original. Many of *Baldur's Gate II*'s features are being retrofitted, including minor but noteworthy touches such as increased character movement speed and the game no longer pausing when viewing the map, plus all the class kits and subraces that were not playable in the original. "*Baldur's Gate* was an epic story told with amazing characters and it still plays well 14 years on," says Trent Oster, who is heading up the project. "With our work we've tried to improve on the rough edges and polish to let the core work really shine through. I'm happy to say we are getting very close to having a truly great game experience." *Baldur's Gate: Enhanced Edition* launches on 30 November for PC, Mac and iPad with an Android release also in the pipeline.



THE MAKING OF



» **[PC]** Oh Coran, you and your comically high Dexterity…



» **[PC]** Absolutely essential for keeping track of the quests on offer.



go on to drive the likes of *Planescape: Torment* and the *Icewind Dale* series.

Yet despite all its outstanding achievements, this experimenting with new features in the engine while at the same time designing a sprawling fantasy epic saw development time stretch considerably, taking two and a half years to complete. "The game went way over schedule," says James, "but in the end it was all worth it. We were definitely not satisfied, but whoever is in game development? All of the things we weren't able to do in *Baldur's Gate*, we decided to put into *Baldur's Gate II*."

Despite the fact that the game has some shortcomings when held next to its sequel, particularly in the way of a number of relatively sparse and underdeveloped locations, BioWare had nevertheless crafted such a rich and engrossing world that players found themselves exploring every nook and cranny, pursuing every sub-quest, and striking up conversations with any NPC with a unique name or an unfamiliar look to them.

Further depth was added to the game through cameos from the likes of Elminster and Drizzt Do'Urden, drawing upon *Forgotten Realms* lore and history to appeal to fans familiar with the campaign setting. Indeed, as any who have been sucked into it will attest, *Baldur's Gate* grew into a game of total immersion, of throwing yourself into the Forgotten Realms, of placing yourself in this alternate reality from the moment you fired it up until the time you managed to end a session ("Are you sure you want to quit? Boo will miss you!").

Given that not everything from the abundance of source material on hand could be included, the team found they needed to impose restrictions on what monsters appeared in the game. "We used three guidelines," says James. "We wanted monsters that fans most wanted to see. We wanted monsters that worked for level 1 to 7 characters. And we couldn't use monsters that didn't exist on the Sword Coast."

These proved only minor limitations as the game ended up being filled with an array of popular and familiar creatures, plus a few lesser-known enemies from the *D&D* canon. However, there were more challenging restrictions coming from *D&D* owners TSR.

"TSR's Code of Ethics was somewhat limiting and forced us to often boil everything evil down into simply 'being greedy'", says Chris. "This one dimensional portrayal of evil was limiting but wasn't something that prevented the team from accomplishing its larger goals for the content in the game. We were still able to tell the story we wanted to tell, we still allowed you to be as greedy or psychotic as you liked while you were playing, there just weren't as many ramifications to being evil, or as many avenues to it, as we would have liked."

Sure enough, this limited freedom to flesh out the 'evil' side of the game saw most quests and indeed the core plot playing out much better for good or neutral aligned characters. But while this aspect of the game was criticised by a handful of hardcore roleplayers, the finished product was hardly tarnished



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS
SYSTEM: PC, MAC
YEAR: 2002

STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC
SYSTEM: PC, MAC
YEAR: 2003

MASS EFFECT
SYSTEM: PC, MAC
YEAR: 2007

> We allowed you to be as greedy or psychotic as you liked while you were playing, there just weren't as many avenues to it as we would have liked

BROTHERS IN ARMS: OTHER GAMES SET IN THE FORGOTTEN REALMS



Pool Of Radiance 1988
The original gold box adventure and as crucial to computer role-playing as Mario is to platformers, *POR* sent you to the curiously named city of Phlan as a party of wet-behind the-ears adventurers. Combining first-person exploration with isometric tactical combat, this was a brilliant and legacy-spawning original *Dungeons & Dragons* epic. A critical hit, some might say (groan).



Eye Of The Beholder 1991
Descending into the sewers beneath Waterdeep with a four-person party (and room for two NPCs picked up along the way), *Eye Of The Beholder* was a first-person dungeon-crawling spectacular. Some devilish puzzles, orientation trickery and god forbid you ask where the automapping feature is. A challenging, beautiful and deeply engrossing classic.



Treasures Of The Savage Frontier 1992
The final Gold Box *Forgotten Realms* adventure, *Treasures* was an epic swan song that showed off how much the series had managed to mature since the release of *Pool Of Radiance*. More character options, high-level spells, romances, and varied locations with their own sub-quests within a large world to explore.



Unlimited Adventures 1993
With this full-featured RPG making toolkit, SSI unleashed all one needed to make their own Gold Box adventures. If you'd played through all the originals and still wanted to roll virtual 20s and sweep through a horde of kobolds, this was all you'd need. And it's still alive today with its spiritual successor, the open source *Dungeon Craft*, available on SourceForge.



Icewind Dale II 2002
This was the final Infinity Engine game and, like its predecessor before it, swayed heavier towards combat and tactics than the *Baldur's Gate* series' emphasis on characters and storyline. Its use of *D&D*'s Third Edition ruleset meant new races and classes as well as more spells and enemies, and it sported beautiful graphics and one of videogaming's greatest ever soundtracks.



» **[PC]** Might you know the way to the Friendly Arm inn?

by it, and the critical and popular success of *Baldur's Gate* proved this.

It garnered rave reviews, sold millions of copies and won RPG and Game of the Year awards around the world – not bad for BioWare's first role-playing game and second ever title. Even more impressive when you consider that many of the team had never published a videogame before.

"As the team was finishing up the product I think everybody knew it was going to be successful," recalls Chris. "It was generating an immense amount of press and forum buzz and wherever we showed it people told us they couldn't wait to play the game. I don't think anybody at BioWare or Black Isle Studios understood the extent to which the game would be successful. Personally, I was hoping the game would exceed a half million units, which would be hugely successful for a PC game at that time, but it did something like four times that in its first year and continues to sell today. I attribute that success to an unbelievably devoted, hard-working team that wanted to make a game with a huge depth of high-quality content that was easy and fun to play. Although it was probably the most difficult product I've had to finish, it has been among the most rewarding."

Baldur's Gate's undeniable quality, lasting appeal and dedicated fanbase has seen it enter into that elite group of games that have been immortalised by a massive online following who regularly release mods, content packs, resolution patches and other tweaks to the core game. It is now 14 years since it was first released and people are still talking about it, replaying different character builds, and showing enough interest to justify Trent and his team at Overhaul Games to produce an *Enhanced Edition* remake (see box-out).

"I think *Baldur's Gate* still resonates with people because it single-handedly re-invigorated the western RPG," he says. "At a time when most publishers refused to fund any RPG games, believing the genre dead, BioWare was able to take the time to lovingly craft a great game in a loved setting. The combination of technology, love of the rules system and a deep knowledge of the lore allowed the team to create something fantastic. I feel since then as an industry we've been a little blinded by technology and lost some appreciation of the telling of a wonderful story."

Baldur's Gate: Enhanced Edition's imminent release, the popularity of the titles on GOG.com and the success of the *Project Eternity* kickstarter have all proven that the isometric RPG, while born in the late Nineties and dormant for close on a decade, is a genre far from lost to the past.

> It is now 14 years since it was first released, and people are still talking about it







» **[PC]** A raided caravan mentioned earlier adds to the immersion.



» **[PC]** Your hotel's as clean as what??



» **[PC]** Managing your inventory was essential if you wanted to survive for any length of time.

Open feature

SCUMM ORIGINS

Remarkably, it's 25 years since the famous SCUMM adventure system saw the light of day in Maniac Mansion. Mike Bevan celebrates the anniversary of the famous engine with Ron Gilbert, Tim Shafer, Aric 'Scumm Lord' Wilmunder and assorted LucasArts alumni





» [C64] *Labyrinth*, Lucasfilm Games' graphic adventure based on the Jim Henson movie, was a stepping stone towards SCUMM.





I remember when I was first building that engine, I never thought it would be used beyond *Maniac Mansion*, it was just a tool to get that game done," declares a bemused Ron Gilbert. "The fact that a lot of LucasArts adventures that followed used that engine, and then when I started Humongous Entertainment we licenced the SCUMM system and used that engine for all the kids games we built, and the fact it's still being used today is quite amazing to me."

"Considering how haphazardly put together and poorly programmed the whole thing was, that's more amazing!" quips Ron's *Monkey Island* collaborator Tim Schafer, who is sitting in on our call to Double Fine headquarters in San Francisco.

Jovial banter between longtime friends aside, it's an astonishing achievement. The little scripting language that Ron cobbled together for the Commodore 64 is still powering the *Monkey Island* special editions on multiple platforms from Xbox 360 to iPhone a quarter of a century on. Did the men behind SCUMM, an acronym for 'Script Creation Utility for *Maniac Mansion*', ever dare to dream that would happen?

"I'm not sure at what point we all became aware of the potential," says Chip Morningstar, the programmer that assisted Ron in SCUMM's inception. "We were just trying to get *Maniac Mansion* done in a timely fashion. The slowly dawning awareness of the consequences kind of just crept up on us. But of course it's entirely possible that Ron had visions of world domination from the very beginning, because that's just the kind of guy he is…"

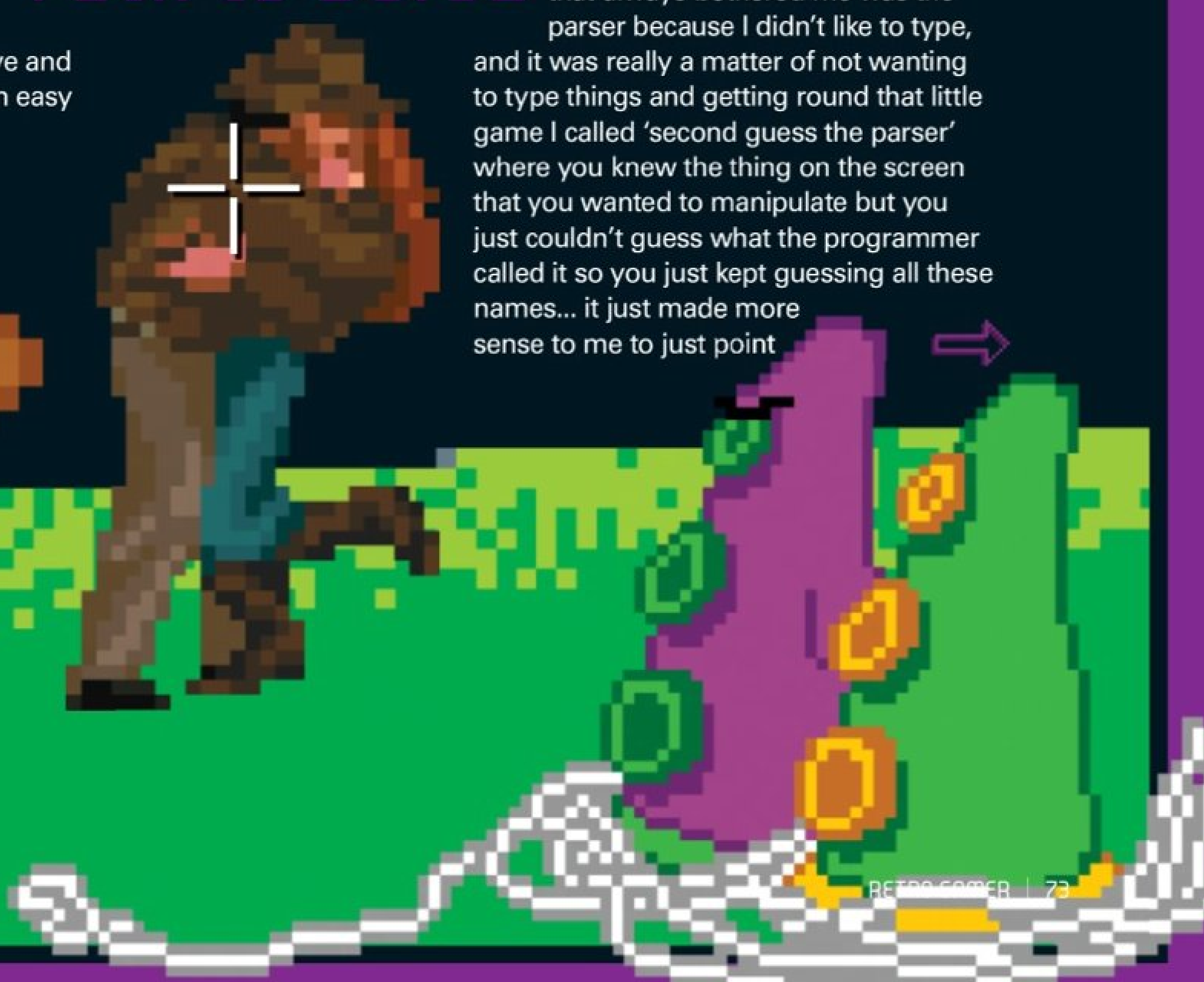
"Ron had the important insight that in a lot of games, the stuff that requires really delicate, performance tuned programming – mainly graphics rendering – was stuff that you tried to get right once and then left alone because futzing with it was treacherous. Whereas the parts that were subject to a lot of revision throughout development – namely, the game logic – were not terribly performance sensitive and so could be implemented in an easy to program, easy to update, and easy to debug scripting language and not suffer any particular performance penalty. So Ron came to me with this insight, which seemed obviously right to me, and asked how hard it would be to write a compiler and I said, 'No problemo, I can do that.' And he specified the language and byte code scheme and I wrote him a compiler that translated from one to the other."

It's possible that Ron had visions of world domination from the very beginning…

"The language was more Ron and Chip's brainchild at the start," explains former LucasArts programmer Aric Wilmunder, who migrated the SCUMM system to the successful PC platform, "since I believe I was working on *Habitat* at the time. I was responsible for the *Habitat* animation system and walking code and a version was used in *Maniac* so that's how I first became involved."

"I played the *King's Quest* games right as I was starting out thinking of *Maniac Mansion*," recalls Ron, "and the thing that always bothered me was the parser because I didn't like to type, and it was really a matter of not wanting to type things and getting round that little game I called 'second guess the parser' where you knew the thing on the screen that you wanted to manipulate but you just couldn't guess what the programmer called it so you just kept guessing all these names… it just made more sense to me to just point







» [C64] Nurse Edna says hello in the original C64 version of *Maniac Mansion*. Now where did I put that hamster?



at an object and 'touch' it if you wanted to manipulate it."

"And he's a bad speller," laughs Tim. "Ron's personality is that he's often frustrated with the counter-intuitiveness of everyday interactions, at the ATM or in the supermarket or whatever, he'll be designing more streamlined systems for it. That's like a natural Ron tendency…"

"There was a little bit of work done with that with the *Labyrinth* game before SCUMM at Lucasfilm," Ron acknowledges. "I think that was the first 'dipping the toe' in that kind of water, although they still had a parser, and still did adventure stuff, but they didn't quite fully embrace the point-and-click adventure."

We ask if Ron can explain the basics behind SCUMM in terms that this **RG** writer can fathom. "SCUMM is broken into two categories," he obliges, "there's a programming language which you type in with an editor and compile with a compiler, and the other part is all the tools that we had to do animation and sounds, to find objects – virtually every tool was something we wrote ourselves with the exception of graphics editing – originally we used Deluxe Paint and later Photoshop."

"SPUTM was the only thing you had to port right?" asks Tim.

"Yes, SPUTM was the run-time engine," replies Ron.

"That was the program that the end-user ran that would initialise the graphics and sounds, read the files from the disk, and interpret the scripts and data in those files to run the game," adds Aric. "When we shipped a game we would rename the interpreter to Monkey.exe or Dig.exe, but during development this tool was called SPUTM, which stood for 'Scumm Presentation Utility (TM). The name wasn't really trademarked, but we wanted to name it after another bodily fluid."

"SCUMM was the tool that tokenised the scripts and merged all of the game assets together into the files that we shipped on the disk. The version of SCUMM that was used for *Maniac* probably shared 80% or more of the commands used in later games such as *Full Throttle*. Once

Talk to Green Tentacle



the language was developed, most of the key commands did not require modifications; 'Walk Bernard to clock' and 'Walk Ben to motorcycle' were essentially unchanged. Probably the most distinctive part of SCUMM was that it was multi-tasking. This meant that multiple scripts could effectively run simultaneously."

"I got a Computer Science degree from college," Tim says, "and I was programming in C language, then my first job was programming SCUMM and I completely forgot how to program in C, it kind of ruined me for programming! SCUMM takes pride in being an English readable language – you can look at it and read it and it will say 'Guybrush walk to window, say this line, walk over here, this is an object, here's a verb…' It goes out of its way not to have unnecessary brackets, strange symbols or weird naming conventions."

"Part of my goal when I first created it was for it to be a programming language that non-programmers could use," says Ron. "I don't know if the language ever fulfilled that ultimate goal but a lot of what Tim mentions was a result of that initial desire. I wonder if I'd known that the SCUMM system would become so popular and well-known should I have named it

Part of my goal was for it to be a programming language non-programmers could use



» [Amiga] SCUMM's portability meant that games like *Zak McKracken* was easily converted.

something different… although the fact that it was named the SCUMM system was probably part of the reason it did become so famous…"

"The most important thing was that the rules for naming all the tools had be based on disgusting bodily fluids, of course," Tim reminds us. "If you let a bunch of programmers come up with their own names they'll come up with the worst ones possible!" Which explains how SPIT (a font editor), FLEM (a graphical room management tool), BYLE (an animation tool for digital 'actors') and others came into being.

"For a short time we had a tool that we called SMEGMA," Aric says. "One of the programmers had a child and told us that when babies are born, their first bowel movements consist of this. Well, he was mistaken."

"We thought that was a really great word and we had it as the name of the tool until we went and looked up the meaning," chuckles Ron. "And then very quickly it didn't become the name of the tool…"

"As you can probably imagine, standing near us in the lunch line was probably a bit unsettling as we talked about SCUMM, BYLE, MMUCUS, FLEM, et al," says Aric.

"The one thing I did on *Maniac Mansion*," divulges Tim, "the tiniest touch I had on it was that when we converted it to Nintendo all the objects were slightly mis-tagged so I had to go into every room and push the tags around. But it shows up on my Mobygames profile so whenever I'm introduced somewhere it's like 'Tim's first game was *Maniac Mansion*…'"

So seeing as Ron admits he created SCUMM solely for the purpose of getting *Maniac Mansion* done without an enormous headache, how did it come to wind up in so many other games? "That was really because of *Zak Mckracken*," explains Ron, "because David Fox was one of the programmers on *Maniac Mansion* and he wanted to go off and do his own game, and I think he just became so used to the SCUMM system, and he wanted to do an adventure game, and he liked the point-and-click stuff, so I think using the engine

for *Zak* was a natural evolution. I had to make a few changes because there were parts of SCUMM that were very hard-coded for *Maniac*, and I had to remove all that stuff. Once I did that the system became very generic, it wasn't about a single game any more; it was a generic tool that could be used for anything. It had broken out and everybody started looking at using it."

"One of the most powerful things about SCUMM," notes Tim, "was that we would do all this programming to make the gameplay work and then we wanted to do the Amiga and the Atari ST versions, all you had to re-write was SPUTM, and then the SCUMM files were all totally identical. I don't remember that being a common practice back then: the scripting language being separate from the game code."

"Well Infocom with *Zork* and their text adventures, had this engine called the Z-engine that they used to build their games," says Ron, "and I think Sierra had an engine too, but I think one of the things that Lucasfilm really did with the SCUMM engine early on was porting all these other platforms, and as Tim described, once you've ported SPUTM, games like *Maniac Mansion* and *Monkey Island* just ran so quickly on all of these platforms."

"Infocom's games were created using a massive DEC mainframe, kept in a refrigerated clean room guarded by priests in lab coats," says ex-Infocom

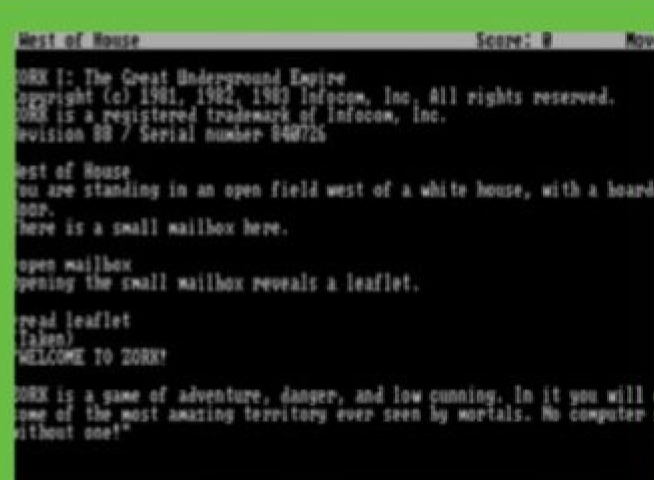
» [PC] Guybrush, fighting like a dairy farmer in *The Secret of Monkey Island*.





ADVENTURE GAME ENGINES – BEFORE AND AFTER SCUMM





ZIL (Z-MACHINE)

From Infocom's legendary text-based game *Zork*, ZIL (Zork Implementation Language) was conceived, with an advanced parser that recognised complex sentence structures, and Z-Machine, a 'virtual machine' allowing for compatibility on any home computer platform.



SAGA

An updated version of the original two-word text-only parser system in the early Scott Adams adventures, SAGA allowed simple disk-based graphics. An expanded version, SAGA+, with full sentence parsing, was used near the end of the company's run on several superhero games.



AGI (ADVENTURE GAME INTERPRETER)

Originally created for Sierra Online's *King's Quest*, the AGI engine allowed a text parser to be combined with a graphic background on which the player's animated character moved around. The engine and interface went on to be used in several Sierra games.



SCI

Used from *King's Quest IV* onwards, initially incorporating a graphic engine and parser, the second version of SCI integrated a fully mouse-driven interface, similar to that of the SCUMM adventures, and 256 colour graphics. The enhanced engine was used for several others such as *King's Quest V*.



VIRTUAL THEATRE

First seen in *Lure Of The Temptress*, Revolution Software's engine had a SCUMM-style mouse-driven interface and allowed 'virtual actors' in the game world to exhibit AI and move around independently. Improved versions of the engine were used for *Beneath A Steel Sky* and *Broken Sword I* & *II*.



GRIME

The LucasArts adventure engine that followed SCUMM, GrimE was one of the first to embrace the 3D perspective in the genre, requiring keyboard or joystick rather than mouse control. It was used for just two titles – the acclaimed *Grim Fandango* and the less well received *Escape From Monkey Island*.

THE CLASSIC LUCASARTS SCUMM ADVENTURES

MANIAC MANSION (1987)

Originally conceived for the Commodore 64, *Maniac Mansion* is a heartwarmingly wacky broth of B-movie and comedy horror tropes, featuring the pioneering mechanic of controlling three separate characters throughout its storyline. Based loosely on the layout of the Skywalker Ranch, it's the game's bizarre antagonists, Dr Fred, Nurse Edna, Green and Purple Tentacle, and the aptly named Weird Ed, that create its most hilarious moments.







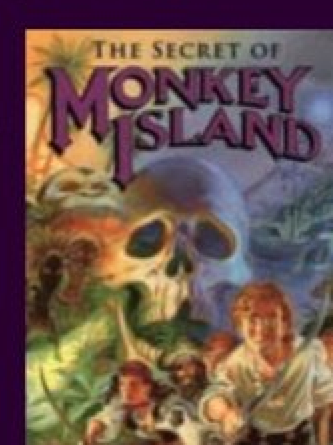
MONKEY ISLAND 2: LECHUCK'S REVENGE (1991)



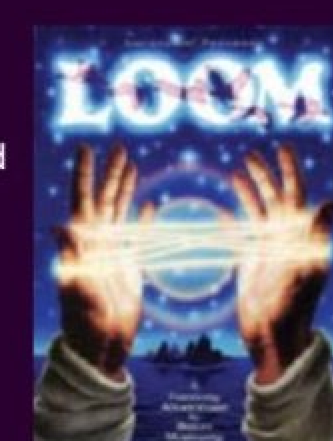
Bigger, with added simians, *Monkey Island 2* is a master class in writing an adventure sequel, fleshing out the beloved characters of the original and providing our hero with more wonderfully humorous Caribbean islands to plunder with his rapier-like wit. And ultimately, Guybrush's quest for the 'fabulous treasure' of Big Whoop turns out to be something that not even the mightiest grog-swilling pirate could ever have expected…

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND (1990)

Monkey Island introduced us to the dubious charms of Guybrush Threepwood, insult sword-fighting ("How appropriate, you fight like a cow…"), and one of adventure gaming's best villains, the evil ghost pirate LeChuck. With a tight, very funny script by Ron Gilbert, Tim Schafer and Dave Grossman. 22 years on, it remains a perfectly formed adventure.



LOOM (1990)



Loom's designer Brian Moriarty started out on Infocom text adventures like *Beyond Zork* and *Wishbringer*, and this ethereal fantasy title was equally innovative. The interface integrated a musical distaff that could be played to create various four-note tunes, each tied to a different spell in the game, used by protagonist Bobbin Threadbare.





INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS (1992)

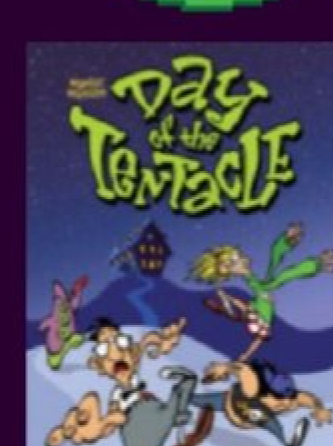


Hal Barwood's graphic adventure sees Indy attempting to foil a Nazi plan to unearth the ancient civilisation of Atlantis, with glamorous sidekick Sophia Hapgood in tow. With an epic storyline, excellent scripting, and an impressive array of locations from the jungles of Peru to ruins of ancient Greece, and the deserts of North Africa, it's still arguably the finest Indiana Jones game ever made.



DAY OF THE TENTACLE (1993)

The beautifully animated sequel to *Maniac Mansion* sees the return of Dr Fred and those diabolical Technicolor tentacles in a time-travelling romp through Colonial America. Various strange plot shenanigans, including Benjamin Franklin's 'helicopter', the Chron-o-John, kumquats, and cow tipping await. This is probably the weirdest of all the SCUMM adventures, in a good way.



SAM & MAX HIT THE ROAD (1993)

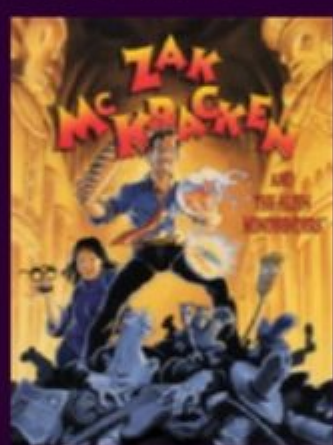


Springing from the warped imagination of artist Steve Purcell, *Sam & Max* follows the crime-fighting antics of a sardonic be-hatted canine and a three-foot hyper-manic bunny rabbit. Mixing film noir with a Looney Tunes aesthetic, art and animation-wise it's another fantastic achievement, and provides a cinematic gaming experience.



ZAK MCKRACKEN AND THE ALIEN MINDBENDERS (1988)

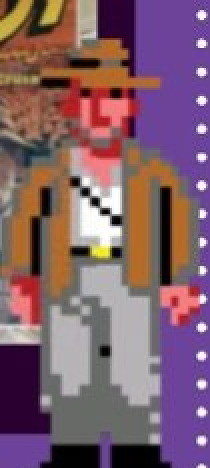
The second Lucas adventure to use the SCUMM engine, David Fox's tale of a hapless reporter on the trail of aliens improbably ties in transcendental meditation, two-headed squirrels, overpriced air travel and a goldfish called Sushi. *Zak* deliberately set out to break free of restrictive locations.



INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE (1989)

The only movie-licenced SCUMM adventure, as with the film *Last Crusade* concerns Indy's quest for the Holy Grail, taking in detours to Venice, Nazi-occupied castles and Zeppelin rides en route. The new IQ (Indy Quotient) system added replay value, awarding points for finding different ways to solve certain puzzles, or fighting enemies.





adventure creator Brain Moriarty, when, like Guybrush Threepwood, we ask about *Loom*. "All of the game designers shared the mainframe via a network of terminals. The language we used, ZIL (Zork Implementation Language) was similar to LISP. It was undoubtedly the most advanced game development environment on the planet. We actually had more computing power at our disposal than many third-world countries."

"SCUMM, on the other hand, had a more casual, homebrew feel. There were no refrigerated rooms or priests, and I never saw anyone in a lab coat, though you might occasionally glimpse a weirdo in a Darth Vader suit lurking outside the gate of Skywalker Ranch. The compiler and tools ran on ordinary PCs. The SCUMM scripting language was very simple, but capable of doing just about anything within the limitations of the target systems. *Loom*'s design was directly influenced by the capabilities of SCUMM. I studied the compiler and toolset and asked myself, "What sort of strange, magical experiences will this system support?"

We ask Ron how significant he thinks the SCUMM engine was for LucasArts. "I think it was really important," he admits. "When I started at Lucasfilm we couldn't make *Star Wars* games because they had licenced them to someone else, and since we really couldn't do the number one thing that the company was known for it really forced us to have to create new things. I think the SCUMM system was integral in that because it gave us this easy way to do these games that were predominantly about story, which was something

» [PC] Guybrush Threepwood's name came in part from simply referring to the un-named character as "guy" in development.



Lucasfilm was known for, and I think it attracted the sort of people who wanted to do those types of games to the company."

"We had this thing called SCUMM University when I first got to LucasArts," remembers Tim. "Every afternoon Ron would come up and tell us how to do one thing like 'Here's how you add a room to the game' or 'Here's how you add a character.' We had this *Sam & Max* art that Steve Purcell had made just for SCUMM U, which was Sam and Max's office, which I don't think ever saw the light of day. It had a few animation states – a static-y television set, rabbit ears made out of a coat hanger that could be in two different positions, and we'd go 'I'm gonna make the static on the TV animate' and then we'd spend all day doing that, and by the end of it we were pooling in art assets from *Indiana Jones*, and all the Scummlets started making their own crazy, weird improvisational SCUMM games set partially in the *Sam & Max* universe. I had a remote-control car in mine that would drive through a mouse hole in their office and then would come out of a filing cabinet in Nazi Germany,

All the Scummlets started making their own crazy, weird improvisational games

FULL THROTTLE (1995)

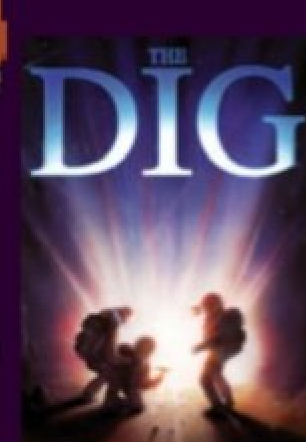
By the time of Tim Schafer's futuristic biker-themed adventure, the integration of the INSANE engine (originally created for *Rebel Assault*) into SCUMM meant that mixing real-time computer-generated animation with pre-rendered cutscenes became a possibility. *Full Throttle* embraced the movie style fully, as seen in its panoramic opening sequence, and with Mark Hamill playing the game's main antagonist.





THE DIG (1995)

Based on a story by Steven Spielberg, *The Dig* had the most troubled gestation of all of the LucasArts adventures, with a six-year development period during which it went through four different project leaders. Using a mix of traditional hand drawn graphics and pre-rendered sequences, the resulting game is an intriguing hotchpotch of science-fiction themes, as a Space Shuttle crew explore a mysterious asteroid, and discover more than they bargained for.



THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND (1997)

The third *Monkey Island* features a revised cartoon art style and full voice acting, giving it a radically different feel to the previous two games. *Curse* has its fair share of genuinely funny moments, such as the encounter with Murray the talking skull, and the 'legend' of El Pollo Diablo, and while not quite matching the brilliance of its predecessors it's a quality instalment.







» [PC] *Sam & Max* has some of the finest hand-drawn art of the SCUMM games. The duo continues to terrorise hapless perps in Telltale Games' episodic series of adventures.

although we probably shouldn't talk about that…"

"We were working with what we had," laughs Ron.

"Regarding Scummlet training, I think that one time it was at the Ranch and everyone was up on the third floor of the main house," remembers Aric. "George's offices were on the second floor so they had to be well behaved."

"*Monkey Island* was the first game where I felt I had once-and-for-all figured out what an adventure game should be," Ron admits. "*Maniac Mansion* was just a mess from a design stand-point and *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* was starting to get a bunch of stuff figured out, but when *Monkey Island* came around, that's when I wrote an article called 'Why Adventure Games Suck' that outlined a dozen rules of adventure game design and *Monkey Island* was a test to see if all those things I had written about were actually true. I think that it's a much cleaner, tidier game than the other ones."

"I loved the *Pirates Of The Caribbean* ride, and I always wanted to make a game that existed in that world – that weird Caribbean-type environment with all these fun-loving pirates. For me, adventure games have always started with the world and the characters just sort of come out of that." At this point Tim points out that naming the lead character 'Guy-brush' kind of confirms this.

"What can I say? I just don't care about the characters…" Ron grins.

We offer that many of the SCUMM games succeeded because of their humour, from the wacky, Chuck Jones/Tex Avery style of *Day Of The Tentacle* and *Sam & Max* to the wrier, more Pythonesque comedy of *Monkey Island*. "The humour in *Sam & Max* was a little zany," says Ron, "but I think the humour in *Monkey Island* was a more 'sophisticated' humour."

At this point Tim starts to laugh. "Like that bit with the guy training with the sword-fighting machine and the bucket…"

"I guess the humour was a little drier, a lot of throwaway lines – those were all text bits read in a deadpan way, and Guybrush was always a bit of a deadpan guy in my head, and whenever I hear a voiced version of Guybrush, people are always 'telling' the jokes a lot more than I would imagine would be happening, so *Monkey Island* for me was, I don't know if it was 'sophisticated', but we were not trying to sell the humour so much. I think humour is a good way for the game industry to reach audiences because I think it's a mainstream idea, more mainstream than hyper-violence."

An interesting side note on SCUMM is the fact that it first introduced the term 'cutscene' to videogames. "The scenes that take place in the mansion, they were on timers, so when we decided to play the scene with Dr Fred we would literally just cut away from the game and



RON'S FAVOURITE SCUMM PUZZLE

"At the end of the *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* there's a scene where Indy has to step off a cliff, and all he's told in the lore from the Grail is that he just needs to have faith. In the movie he does this because there's some kind of quasi-camouflaged platform he lands on, and when we were doing the game we wanted to do something similar. The player just needed to click on the other side of the screen over the empty ledge, and if they did that the character would walk safely across. If they took too much time scanning around the screen with their cursor we decided they didn't have faith and when they'd walk off the ledge, they'd die. I always liked that puzzle because we were asking if players had faith in what we asked them to do."



play it, so that just became the shorthand, we called them 'cuts scenes' because they cut away from the game, and then there was a command in the SCUMM language that was called cutscene that handled all of the logistics – saving the game state, playing the cutscene and then restoring the game state when it was over. It was a bold point on the back of the *Maniac Mansion* box, people talked about them and that's how the word got connected and then grew into a more generic term."

"It's funny because it actually fell out of favour, like a time-driven cutscene, we decided we didn't want to do any more with the next game," says Tim.

"In *Monkey Island* we were tying cutscenes more into events that the player made happen by interacting with the world,





» [PC] *Monkey Island 2* is a corker, apart from some of Guybrush's terrible lines.

With each new game we tried to push the boundaries and do things that hadn't been done before

» [PC] The distinctive, Chuck Jones-inspired visuals of *Day Of The Tentacle* were quite a leap from the graphics of the original *Maniac Mansion*.





» [PC] *Full Throttle* was the first SCUMM adventure to combine real-time animated graphics with pre-rendered video cutscenes.



and it just felt a little cleaner," says Ron. "We actually had a rule at Humungous Entertainment, which was no cutscene can last longer than ten seconds. We knew from watching kids play games that if you took control away from them for more than ten seconds they would just lose interest."

As SCUMM evolved, games like *Full Throttle* and *Curse Of Monkey Island* began to integrate full motion video, replacing the traditional in-game cutscenes seen previously. However *Curse* would be the final LucasArts adventure to use the SCUMM engine. "The main reason we didn't use SCUMM for *Grim Fandango* is that Ron and Aric had left and we really needed someone keeping up the engine side of SCUMM," explains Tim. "The best programmers at LucasArts were working on projects like *Jedi Knight*, which were 3D engines. Because of the game *Bioforge* I wanted to do something 3D using pre-rendered backgrounds and so we decided to do a new engine. It was really the programmers' decision to use a new scripting engine from the University of Rio called Lua, which BioWare had also used for its first couple of games, instead of doing a whole new scripting engine from scratch."

Grim Fandango would be one of LucasArts' last original point-and-click adventures, after which Tim moved on, founding Double Fine Productions and unleashing games like the splendid *Psychonauts* and *Brütal Legend* on the world. But the recent success of the *Double Fine Adventure* Kickstarter campaign, which raised a colossal $3.45 million to fund a traditional point-and-click style adventure, has brought the genre back into the spotlight. "I always maintained that the adventure game market did not fall off," he muses, "it just didn't grow as much as other parts of the industry. And that's the thing that Kickstarter does. It allows those people to get together and say 'Hey this might not be the thing that makes the maximum return on investment, but we still want it, so here's a way to pool our money together and make it happen.'"

"*Double Fine Adventure* is very much being made like a point-and-click adventure because it's backed by fans of the genre. When we had the choice of doing things like we did before or coming up with something new, I do feel a lot safer doing things the old way because I know the people that are paying for the game like those old games and they don't mind dialogue trees and cutscenes. That being said there's a lot to evolving adventure games, there's a lot of opportunity to getting games to new audiences that have never touched a computer before with devices like the iPad."

Ron's upcoming project for Double Fine, a beautifully illustrated platform romp, *The Cave*, also harks back to his SCUMM adventure designing roots. "The Cave is obviously very influenced by classic adventure games," he reveals, "with the puzzle-solving and humour. I think it's very much lifting a lot from those old games – we don't do dialogue trees but there's this strange, slightly nonsensical world that it has that I like a lot."

Long-time adventure fans may also spot a reference in the game's opening sequence that takes them back to the early days of Lucas adventures. Says Ron, "the number one reason that I wanted that beginning scene in *The Cave* to be that way is that is because it's the character selection screen from *Maniac Mansion*, and people do see that… that was on purpose."

"I was always most excited and most proud of the most recent game we were working on," reflects Aric. "With each new game, we tried to push the boundaries and do things that had never been done before. I've always thought that if you aren't moving the art or the technology forward, why bother? There were some favourite moments, like the opening animation in *Day Of The Tentacle*, or the humour in *Sam & Max*, the music in *Full Throttle*, or being able to walk all three kids simultaneously in *Maniac Mansion*. Each accomplishment was very different, but like your children, they each hold a special place in your heart."

» [PC] The talkie version of *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis* shows the quality of Hal Barwood's script.



ScummVM

ScummVM is a freeware interpreter, originally designed specifically to run the vintage LucasArts SCUMM adventures on modern platforms. The interpreter has been expanded to be compatible with many other games, such as *Flight Of The Amazon Queen*, *Beneath A Steel Sky*, and many of Sierra's graphic adventures including the *King's Quest* and *Leisure Suit Larry* series. While Ron Gilbert has endorsed ScummVM as an important tool in keeping classic adventures games alive, LucasArts has always taken a more negative stance on the project. However it remains an invaluable tool for experiencing the SCUMM adventures on today's PCs as well as a myriad of other devices.



25 GAMES TO GET YOU IN THE FESTIVE SPIRIT

As most of us are too old to have advent calendars, we thought we'd do our own spin on the idea and recommend a seasonal game to play for every day in December, right up to the big day

1. Shenmue 2000 (Dreamcast)

❑ *Shenmue* captures the build-up to Christmas just as well as the day itself. As winter arrives to the streets of Dobuita, they become covered in snow, its shopkeepers start hanging bunting and banners to attract passers by, and despite the drop in temperature, the mood around town feels a bit warmer. The music also changes, with versions of *Silent Night* and *Jingle Bells* playing in the background, and there's even the obligatory drunk Santa walking the streets advertising the local shops. Despite the story's failure to significantly touch on the poignant fact it is Ryo's first Christmas without his father, it's still a memorable part in the game for many fans.





17. Maria's Christmas Box 1988 (Various)

❑ We can't imagine anybody got aroused playing the Speccy version of *Maria's Christmas Box* – a strip poker game starring Page 3 girl Maria Whittaker, unless you had a soft spot for pretty girls in freaky clown make-up (as the Speccy version made poor Maria look). The Commodore 64 version's visuals are choppy, but the Amiga and ST versions featured digitised images of the glamour model seductively holding mistletoe in a saucy Santa outfit. It's certainly not the game to play when gran's around…

12. Daze Before Christmas 1994 (Mega Drive)

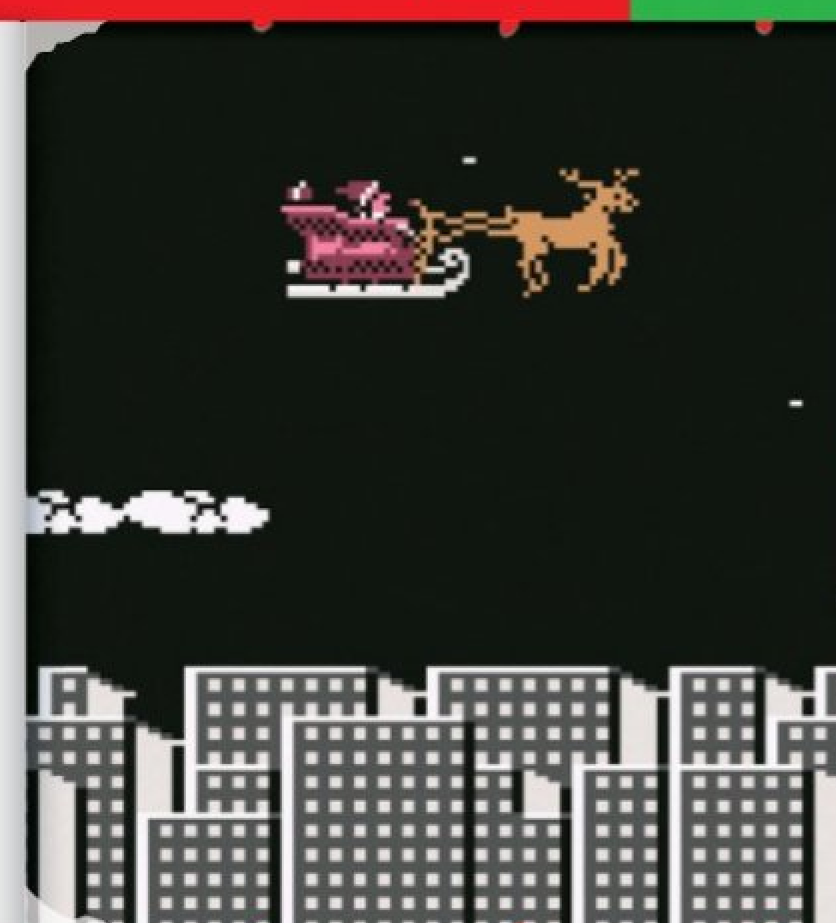
❑ A portly everyman with facial hair who hangs around with small people and is strongly associated with the colour red; we're sure Mario would argue Santa is the perfect hero. *Daze Before Christmas* sees the jolly present-giver star in a colourful 16-bit platformer that finds him trying to thwart an evil snowman that has imprisoned everyone he holds dear. Applying a *Gremlins*-style rule to the jolly red fatman that sees him turn into his powerful alter ego Anti-Claus when his bushy lips touch a drop of coffee, *Daze Before Christmas* doesn't take Christmas all that seriously but that's its charm.





4. The Official Father Christmas 1989 (Various)

❑ *The Official Father Christmas* was a budget release from Alternative Software that helped raise money for the Save The Children charity. The game takes the structure of three mini-games which offer a window into the working day of Mr. Claus. The first sees you racing to construct his new sleigh on Christmas Eve, running around his workshop locating the sleigh parts as mischievous elves try to steal them off him. The second has you writing a gift list and then collecting the requisite toys, and the final stage involves flying around the globe in his brand new sleigh, delivering them down chimneys.



23. Bible Adventures 1995 (NES)

❑ *Bible Adventures* has naught to do with the story of Christmas but it may remind you to think about the meaning behind it. Three famous bible stories receive game translations – Noah's Ark, David and Goliath, and Get Baby Moses Safely Through *Super Mario Bros. 2*. All pretty much involve picking things up – twins of animals, Moses, sheep – and delivering them somewhere safely and soundly. And there's not really much more to it than that. We guess you could argue this overarching gameplay does share similarity with the actions of Santa Claus, but we accept that's straw clutching.

The Official Father Christmas was a budget release from Alternative Software that helped raise money for the Save The Children charity



15. Moley Christmas 1987 (ZX Spectrum)

❑ Covermounts were always a great part of Christmas, with many publishers and developers seeing them as a perfect way to give something back to fans and followers. Given away with the 1987 December issue of *Your Sinclair*, this six-screen follow up to *Auf Wiedersehen Monty* saw Monty Mole avoiding various dangers and jumping on platforms to retrieve the items needed to produce the game you were playing and then deliver it from Gremlin Graphics offices to eager *YS* readers. It's all very post-modern.



6. Christmas Lemmings 1994 (Amiga / PC)

❑ This festive *Lemmings* spin-off started out as two four-level demos before getting turned into a full release in 1993, such was its popularity. *Christmas Lemmings* featured 32 levels split between two difficulty levels, and all were Christmas themed – featuring Lemmings dressed in Santa outfits and levels adorned with snow. A follow up/rerelease came in 1994, which added a further 32 stages across two more difficulty levels.



9. Santa's Grotty Christmas 1984 (C64)

❑ Bad Taste Software made a self-prophesised name for itself for delivering bad and crass games on 8-bit computers, and *Santa's Grotty Christmas* is one of its worst. Playing the role of Santa in his sleigh, you must drop stockings down chimneys but not the super-regular bowel movements of his reindeer; otherwise the kids will get a nasty surprise Christmas morning. Bad Taste released a free PC remake in 2012 that added a few new sections to the game. Fans will be pleased to hear that it's as bad as the original.



18. Banjo-Kazooie 1998 (N64)

❑ There's often something Christmassy about Rare's N64 games. *GoldenEye*'s snow patrol level, *Diddy Kong Racing*'s snowy tracks, but the one that seems to stick in gamers' heads the most is *Banjo-Kazooie*'s Freezeezy Peak level. The fifth world in the game, it's a stunning Christmas winter wonderland. With a giant snowman, huge wrapped presents and a Christmas tree with lights to switch on, it captures the fun of Christmas brilliantly. You can even take a sled ride and play Santa to a family of polar bears. It's the ultimate Christmas experience.

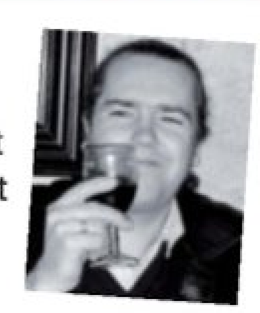
20. Snowball Sunday 1988 (C64)

❑ Lobbing carefully tightly packed balls of snow is seen by many kids (and us) as a fun and sometimes painful part of Christmas time. Released as a covermount game by Commodore Disk User, *Snowball Sunday* is a rollickingly good snowball fight sim and its genius comes from its simplicity. There no points to score, and there's only one level; its gameplay is as pure as the driven snow. With the snow-lobbing action enhanced by Lou Gray's fantastically catchy music, it's the perfect game to dip in and play while gran commandeers the telly to watch the Queen's speech.



With a giant snowman, huge wrapped presents, and a Christmas tree with lights to switch on, Banjo-Kazooie captures the fun of Christmas brilliantly

Jon Hare on… Cannon Soccer



How did *Cannon Soccer* come about?
Like most of Sensible's cover disc games it was just a bit of fun for us between projects. It only took about a week or two. It was only ever intended to be a one-off, a bit of fun.

Were you approached by *Amiga Power* to create the game or did you go to them with the idea?
We approached them with the idea I think… although maybe they asked us about some kind of festive cover disk.

***Sensible Soccer* and *Cannon Fodder* had met before through *Sensible Soccer: England vs. Germany*, why did you choose a different direction for *Cannon Soccer*?**
Well I think in those days we did what the hell we wanted and people seemed to like it. We didn't have any planning committees or market testing procedures to discover what people liked. We just shot from the hip, like all good artists should, and that is how it came out. It is very simple to make a good game or indeed a good anything… good people, good ideas, work hard until it is finished properly.

Finally, what game most helps to get you into the Christmas spirit and why?
The game that gets me most into the Christmas spirit is probably Monopoly (for real) or charades… as I rarely play these games except sometimes with my family at Christmas. I do not associate computer games with Christmas, I am too old to think like that. In my childhood days we got KerPlunk or Buckaroo in our Christmas stocking if we were lucky!

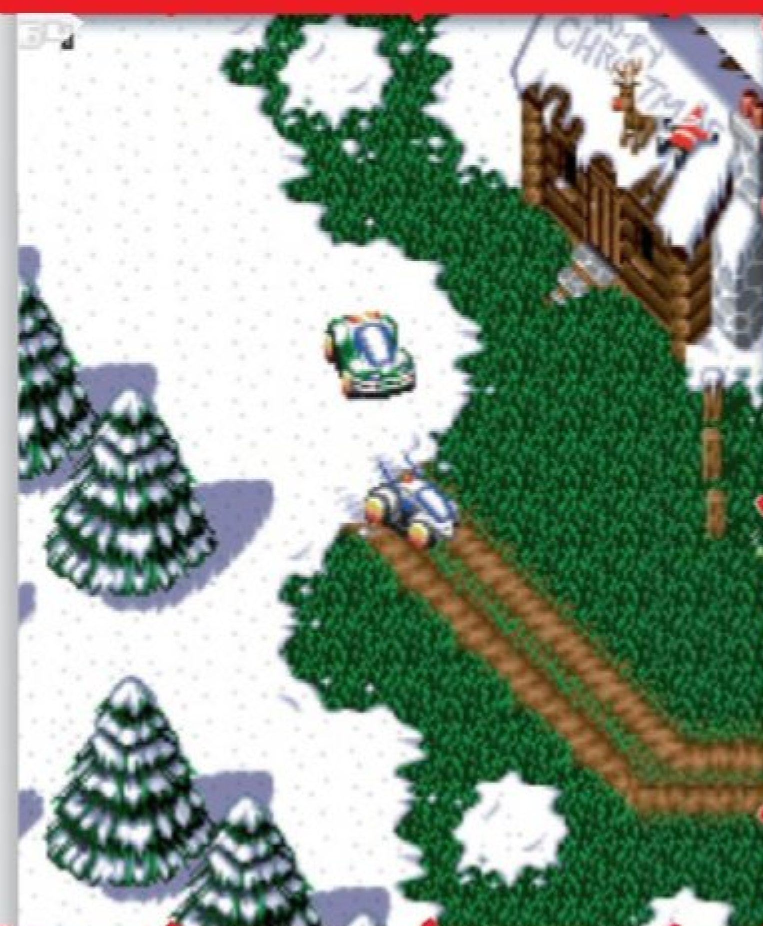


7. Snow Bros 1990 (Arcade)

❑ The snow is the most original aspect of *Snow Bros*, in that it's used not only to make its heroes but doubles up as a weapon too. The aim of the game is to clear each screen of enemies by lobbing enough snow at them until they become giant snowballs, then rolling them into other enemies. It's a bit like the Mario Bros. throwing skin and body parts around, turning Goombas into meatballs.

11. ATR: All Terrain Racing Christmas Demo 1994 (Amiga)

❑ The Amiga was without a doubt the most popular machine for Christmas-themed demos. Here Team 17 delivered *Amiga Format* readers a splendid little festive themed demo of its popular overhead racer *ATR: All Terrain Racing*. The demo featured an exclusive Christmas-themed track decorated with trees, log cabins, bunting, snowmen and some exhausted (or possibly dead?) looking Santas. The finished game would repurpose the course, but obviously once all the Christmas decoration was taken down. It's an ace little Christmas cracker.

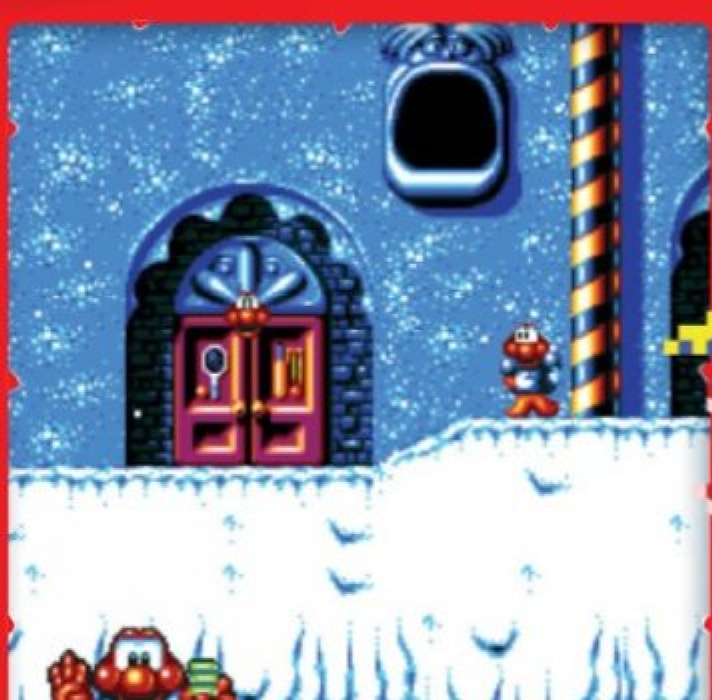




14. Cannon Soccer 1994 (Amiga)

❑ There is something very Christmassy about football. Perhaps it stems from Christmas truces during the war, where soldiers from opposing sides would break from the conflict to play. *Cannon Soccer* is kind of the polar opposite of a Christmas truce to be fair: a two-level demo that sees the *Cannon Fodder* soldiers moving down Sensible Software footy players. The demo featured two stages: It's Snow Time, a snow-themed level, and the more popular Land Of Hope And Glory, which took place on a Sensi football pitch.

“If you like to get into the festive spirit by beating up clowns, then we suggest Batman Returns”



3. James Pond 2: Codename RoboCod 1991 (Various)

❑ Save Christmas. That was the premise behind this *James Pond* sequel. James's arch-nemesis Doctor Maybe has taken over Santa's workshop and kidnapped his helpers (who in the original game are penguins not elves, thanks to an advertising deal with Penguin biscuit maker McVities). It's probably the best Christmas-themed platformer on this list.

24. Batman Returns 1993 (Super NES)

❑ If you like to get into the festive spirit by beating up clowns riding motorcycles then we suggest taking Konami's excellent – but short – *Batman Returns* for a spin. It's a polished *Final Fight*-alike, with great arcade graphics, satisfying combat and bags of atmosphere. It nails the feel of prowling Gotham's streets as the caped crusader, making you feel like an all-powerful superhero by letting you slam enemies everywhere. That the movie takes place during Christmas only helps enhance the atmosphere and gothic look of the game.



5. Horace Goes Skiing 1982 (ZX Spectrum)

❑ Like E.T., Horace wasn't the cutest or most kid-friendly 8-bit creation. He had big alien eyes where most creatures have nipples and looked like he'd been designed using a pair of rusty old craft scissors. He does hold a special place in many gamers' hearts though. *Horace Goes Skiing* is split into two distinct levels. The first is a tough *Frogger* clone, in which Horace must cross a busy road to get to his skis. The second is the more fun downhill slalom race section, which sees Horace avoiding the trees and passing through point gates. It's challenging, fun and addictive.



Roger Hulley on… The Official Father Christmas



How did the idea for The Official Father Christmas come about and the connection to the Save The Children charity?
I was talking with a colleague of mine about licences and we asked ourselves what would be the most interesting children's licence or the one with the most potential and jokingly I came up with the idea of a Father Christmas game as all kids love Father Christmas. Then I thought, actually we can make it official – although this was tongue in cheek obviously. As we didn't have any licensing costs, we decided to give that money to a charity instead and Save The Children seemed apt.

Who designed the game?
One of our developers, Enigma Variations.

Was it a strong seller for Alternative?
It was a great seller and the retailers really got behind it.

Why did Alternative never release another Santa-themed videogame?
The game was released in 1989. The 8-bit market dwindled soon after then and with rising costs of 16-bit games and beyond it wasn't possible to take a risk on such a title again. As an 8-bit budget title at £2.99, a parent could take the risk and buy it as a stocking-filler. That was unlikely to happen with a more expensive 16-bit game.

Finally, what game most gets you in the Christmas spirit and why?
Christmas is a time for families, so anything that can be played with all the family. On that basis we lean towards the Nintendo Wii and games such as *Mario Kart*. Definitely not any first-person shooters!



21. Duke: Nuclear Winter 1997 (PC)

❏ Santa's been brainwashed by aliens and Duke must venture to the North Pole to rescue him. In this festive *Duke 3D* add-on, killer snowmen, machine gun-toting female elves and pigs cops sporting Santa hats decorate *Duke* levels paved with snow, and pick-ups are even gift wrapped. It's not the greatest *Duke* expansion, the new sprites look a bit rushed and ugly, but it is the closest thing fans have to a festive special.





22. Super Star Wars – The Empire Strikes Back 1993 (Super NES)

❏ We're recommending you park yourself comfortably in front of the telly on Christmas Eve with a bowl of popcorn in grabbing distance to play *Super Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*. The game opens with a ferocious run-and-gun level that takes place on the famous ice planet, but has a great Mode 7 version of the Battle of Hoth. Brrr!

2. Santa's Xmas Caper 1990 (Various)

❏ Most videogames starring Santa often featured some sort of side-scrolling sleigh section that saw you depositing parcels or socks into people's chimneys. Zeppelin Games took this idea to its natural conclusion with *Santa's Christmas Caper*, a side-scrolling shooter in which Santa and Rudolph have to battle through cluttered airspaces. The C64 port fares better than the Speccy port, with better graphics, more enemies and smoother gameplay. It's like Christmas come to *Parodius*.



19. Special Delivery: Santa Christmas Chaos 1984 (C64)

❏ *Santa Christmas Chaos* features three distinct levels and each is pretty playable. The first sees Santa collecting presents dropped by angels, while avoiding clouds and items dropped by devils. Once he has enough gifts in his sack, Santa can then land on homes and make his way down their chimneys. In the second section Santa must hop between ladders inside these chimneys as deadly flames travel up and down their rungs. Once inside, you come to the final section: a stealth action game that sees Santa trying to deposit presents under the tree without getting caught by sleepwalkers.



8. Secret Of Mana 1993 (Super NES)

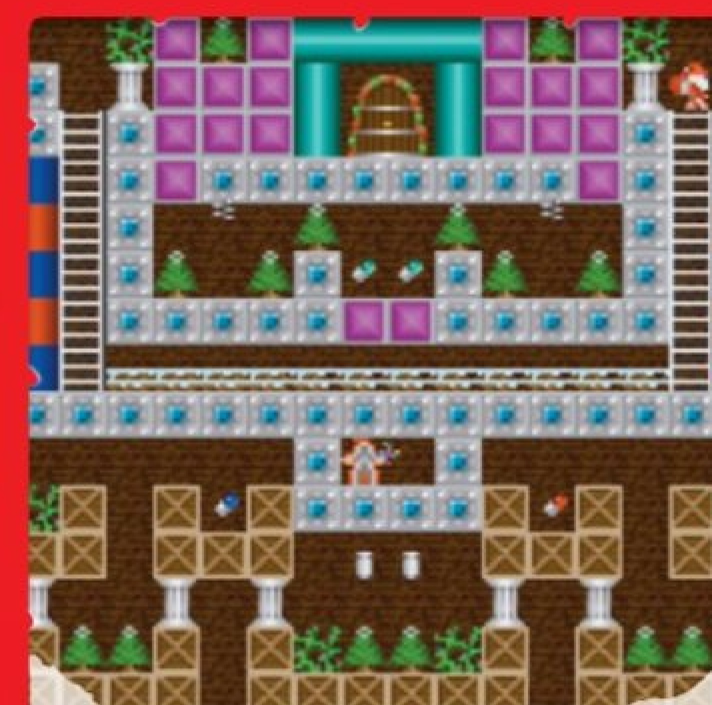
❑ Santa as the villain!? Well, sort of. In *Secret Of Mana*, the boss of the Ice Palace area is called Frost Gigas; a mean old man. When you do defeat him you learn that he is actually Santa Claus. Santa explains that he was transformed due to kids not believing in him, and the negative effects of a Mana Seed which he planned to use to grow a giant Christmas tree to raise belief. Charming and memorable.



10. Jazz Jackrabbit Holiday Hare '94, '95, '98 & The Christmas Chronicles 1994 (PC)

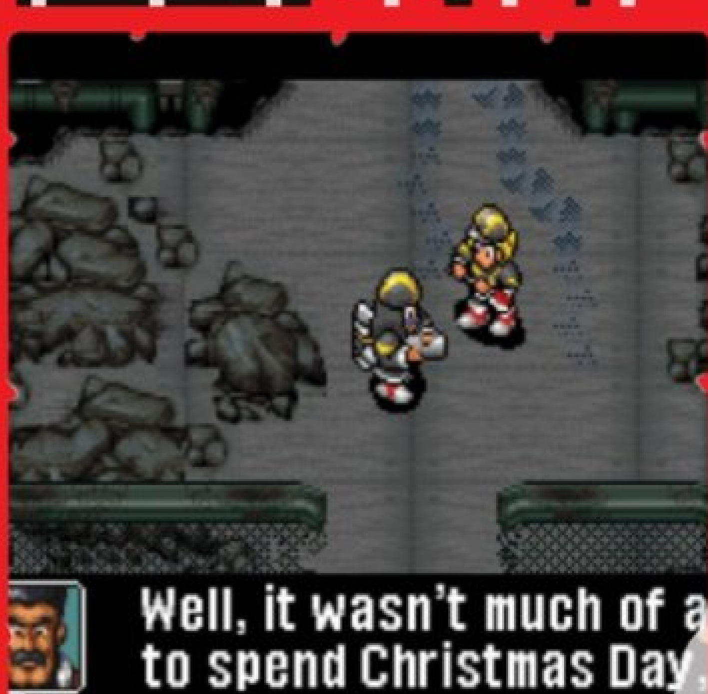
❑ The popular run-and-gun platformer received two festive freeware editions. Both retain the core gameplay of the original shareware games but with a Christmas theme. They also have really catchy renditions of classic Christmas songs, to the extent that it's worth playing them just to listen. The first holiday special Epic put out featured four stages, while the first follow-up had three.





16. Jetpack – Christmas Special 1993 (PC)

❑ This 1993 shareware puzzle platformer by Adam Pederson clearly takes its inspiration from the classic ladders and loot game *Lode Runner*. This festive edition features around ten new stages and basically turns the gems you need to collect into presents and the hero into Santa. The core gameplay is unchanged. It's not the most creative festive special, but it's still a lot of fun.



13. The Firemen 1994 (Super NES)

❑ This relatively obscure SNES game is a good videogame reminder that not everyone gets to be at home for Christmas. It takes place in a flaming skyscraper on Christmas day, and sees you play the role of a fireman who must work with a squad mate to fight angry flames and rescue survivors across six changes. It's fiercely challenging, and certainly a unique Christmas game.

Snow and Christmas trees adorned the levels, Nightopians were dressed as elves, and Christmas tunes replaced the soundtrack

25. Christmas NiGHTS 1996 (Saturn)

❑ The idea of *Christmas NiGHTS* is said to have come to Yuki Naka when he saw a copy of *Christmas Lemmings* in a store while visiting the US. Released in 1996, *Christmas NiGHTS* was a festivity-packed version of Sega's acclaimed Saturn game that comprised two stages (the first two stages from *NiGHTS Into Dreams*), plus a whole new Christmas-themed story for its heroes Claris and Elliot to embark on. Making intelligent use of the Saturn's internal clock, cosmetic elements of the stages and game cleverly changed during the month of December. Snow and Christmas trees adorned the levels, Nightopians were dressed as elves, and Christmas tunes replaced the standard soundtrack. Another great aspect though was a bonus game which showered players with interactive gifts, including concept art, a music mixer, karaoke mode and even a special *Sonic*-themed stage starring Sega's mascot and his arch nemesis Dr Eggman.



THE MAKING OF

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UPLINK

Psychologically reminiscent of Milgram's electric shock experiment, Uplink has you performing evil acts against remote targets. Phil Locke chats to Chris Delay about his morally grey world of hacking

Your mission, entrusted to you based on your reputation for solid, untraceable work, is simple – ruin a life. You have done this so many times before that it is routine, bread and butter. A few bounced connections, a speedy password hack, and you're in. Full read/write control over a criminal records bureau.

40 seconds later, and you're out. Soon, an innocent man will be jailed. Logs deleted, payment received, and you've already forgotten your target's name. Who knows why he had to go? You look at your healthy bank balance, and decide you don't care. A job's a job.

"I wanted the game to reflect how you're behaving, but it's a slightly messed up moral code," says Chris Delay, the creative force behind *Uplink*. "It's not possible to play the game without breaking the law."

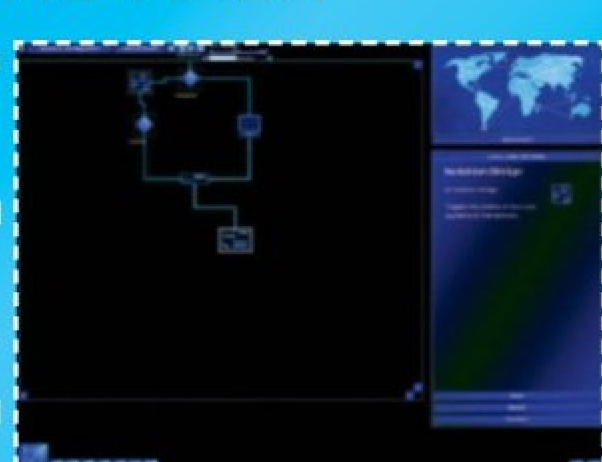


IN THE KNOW

- **PUBLISHER:** INTROVERSION
- **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- **RELEASED:** 2001
- **PLATFORM:** PC, MAC, IOS, ANDROID
- **GENRE:** SIMULATION/HACKING

RETURN OF THE HACK

AFTER A FEW initial worrying hacks, things become a bit easier – for a while. Later missions require an even deeper level of sweat and concentration. Some servers need voice authentication, which requires you to call up the server admin to obtain a sample recording of his voice. (Having heard Chris Delay's voice, I'm now pretty sure of where the confused "Hello?" sound clip originates.) Others provide you with something called a LAN, into which you must break. *Uplink*'s LANs are randomly generated security systems which require all of your previously acquired skills and more to bust open. Unlike other missions, the nature of their generation means that each LAN is different – so, no guides. With a LAN, you're on your own!



Indeed. A typical *Uplink* mission requires you to break into computer systems, bypass security measures, and perform nefarious acts on the target computer – industrial espionage, sabotage, tampering with records – and then escape, leaving no traces. No matter what sort of missions you accept, you will always be a black hat.

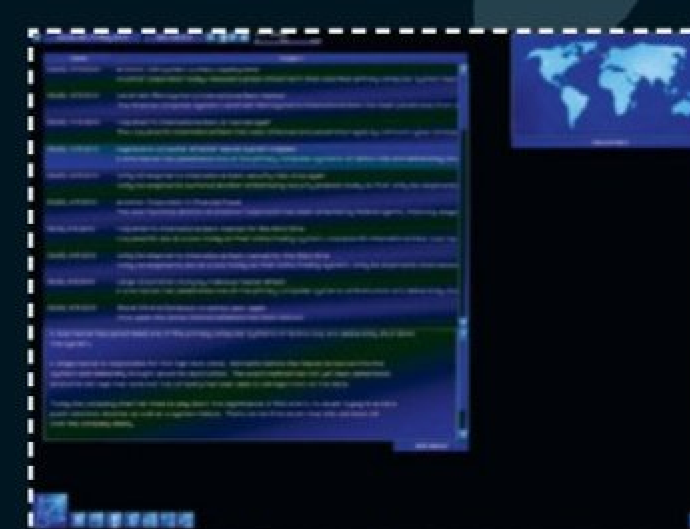
Chris Delay, on the other hand, is a thoroughly nice chap, and unlikely to ruin your life. So nice, in fact, that he didn't even plan to charge for *Uplink*:

"It started when I was at university. I went to Imperial College London, and while I was there I met Mark and Tom and Johnny, the fellow directors of Introversion. I kinda had the idea for the hacking game *Uplink*, and started working on it in my spare time. I was basically gonna give the game away, for free – just make it a free download and basically just ask people for donations if they liked it."

Mark and Tom eventually persuaded Chris that perhaps making some money wouldn't be such a bad idea. Introversion went on to be a successful company (currently working on *Prison Architect*), and *Uplink* continues to sell.

Chris's history may go some way to explaining his initial desire to release Uplink for free. Chris grew up with the Amiga 500, which "had an absolutely rampant piracy scene, at least where I was! I had an absolutely massive collection of games on my Amiga, and it was totally brilliant!"

Not many developers would be so bold, but Chris attributes his passion for making games to the sheer volume of games available to him through piracy in the Amiga days. "I didn't have any money then. I was at secondary school – I was 15 years old! There was no way I could afford games! And everybody had it, everybody was talking about new games that came out – somebody would bring in some disc, and it would get duplicated and copied many times. Everybody would be playing it."



» **[PC]** Some of the missions on the BBS are unavailable to you, seeing as you're the bugger the client is looking for.

So much stock does Chris put in his debt to the Amiga piracy scene, that he even paid tribute to it (and to one of the scene's prominent crack groups) in one of his later games, *Darwinia*: "*Darwinia* actually had an Amiga bootloader at the start, inspired by the Fairlight old-school graphical bootloaders that you had on the start of every Amiga game."

The development of *Uplink* took around 18 months. "For the majority of that time, I was at university – it was a part-time project." Aside from some sound libraries and OpenGL for graphics, all of the code for the

> I wanted the game to reflect how you're playing, but it's a slightly messed up moral code



GOODBYE, WORLD!

GIVEN THAT THE action in *Uplink* consists solely of unabstracted clicking and typing, it's hard for those who haven't played it to understand the tension behind even the simplest hack. Aside from the tutorial, every single mission exacts a harsh penalty for failure. Uplink shares the same perma-death ethos as a roguelike. Be too slow, be too sloppy, and it's a permanent, save-deleting game over. Even worse is the fact that getting caught takes time – days of game time (which, unless you press the fast-forward button, passes in real time) can easily go by with you oblivious to a schoolboy error you made in what you thought was a relatively simple mission. One stray log, and it's curtains. No ceremony, no fanfare, no time to say goodbye to your file. Without a hint of warning, the game rudely boots you out into the cold.





game was written by Chris. "There was definitely some challenge in getting the game up and running, but technically speaking, it was quite a simple project." Nevertheless, there's some quite interesting stuff going on behind the scenes.

Uplink generates its world algorithmically, rather in the same way that *Elite* famously does. As Chris says, "all of the contents of the game world are generated and saved into a file right at the beginning of your game, when you click on 'New User'." Each person, and each of the companies in the game are persistent entities, which means that your actions have consequences. "If you go and break into someone's server, and destroy it, and all of their backups, that genuinely does tank their share price, and ruin their company. That company then offers jobs to catch whoever did it!"

Through his university course, Chris had some prior experience of hacking (albeit legitimately acquired). "At university, there were always hacking games that were done a lot of the time. We were all doing Computer Science, and they would do things like set up a computer in the laboratory and just invite people to hack into it. We did courses on information security and network security, which were all about how to secure a computer network and what sort of common tricks they use to break into computer systems."

However, even more of an influence than real hacking was the world of film. "It's movie hacking, isn't it? That's what it always meant to be. There was a Sandra Bullock movie all about hacking, *The Net* – that figures really heavily. The movie, I thought, was dreadful, but the actual hacking itself… although it doesn't bear any relation to real hacking, it's enough." Chris took this principle for *Uplink* – "you definitely feel like you are having to break through a security system, albeit a weird, really simplified one."

Near the end of *Uplink*, two storyline paths emerge – a moral choice. "Some enterprising players have figured out that you can kinda do both sides of the story," says Chris. This was not the original plan – "I intended players to either pick one of the teams, or neither."

It's movie hacking, isn't it? That's what it was always meant to be



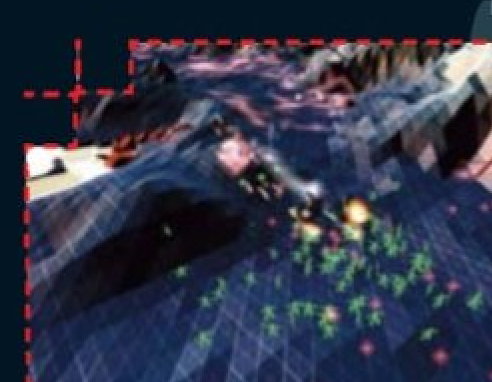
» **[PC]** *Uplink* simulates breaking many types of security system, albeit in a Hollywood style.

It is a testament to the strength and depth of the game that even its creator has been surprised by it.

Uplink is still the most successful game that Introversion has ever made. Despite its age, and its reputation for difficulty, it remains popular – so much so, that it was recently re-released on both iPad and Android tablets. Its continued popularity is in no small part due to its complexity, and to the extremely free and open way in which the game plays out.



» **[PC]** Removing logs covers your tracks – but delete too much and you'll still be caught.

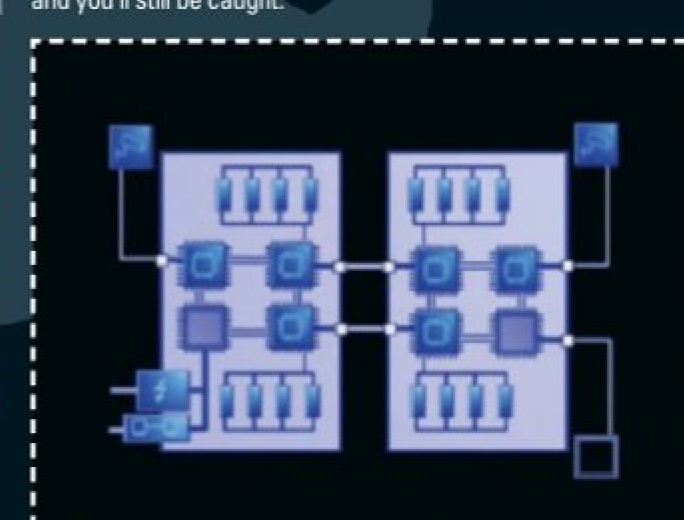


DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

UPLINK
SYSTEM: PC, MAC, IOS, ANDROID
YEAR: 2001

DARWINIA (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: PC, MAC, XBOX
YEAR: 2005

DEFCON
SYSTEM: PC, MAC
YEAR: 2007



» **[PC]** Your Gateway is your connection to the hacking world, and your buffer zone from the authorities.



» **[PC]** Bouncing your connection off a lot of servers is essential, or you'll be traced before you've even cracked the password.

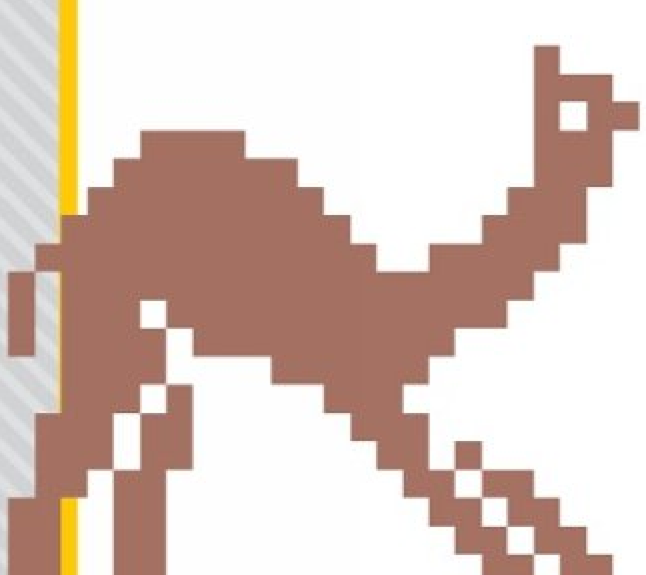


In the chair with...

JEFF MINTER

Known for an extensive catalogue of games that typically involve furry beasties and shooting all of the things, Jeff Minter talks about his time in the industry, from working on a ZX81 through to the latest consoles and iOS devices, and explains how ungulates found their way into his work

SPACESHIPS, IN SPACE, shooting other spaceships? That might have been fine for a while, but Jeff Minter soon dispensed with such conventions. Instead, he crafted distinctive titles starring deadly giant camels and space-faring sheep. Although inspired by arcade games of the day, Jeff's creations took things further, building on core concepts to create engaging, hardcore shoot-'em-ups for the home. He even managed to make an ostensibly quaint game about gardening engaging and hardcore. Jeff speaks to Craig Grannell about his career, his love for camels, and the need to do your own thing.



What was the first game that grabbed you?
Space Invaders. I'd heard it was big in Japan and when it came to a nearby funfair, I thought I'd better try it out. But there was no connection as to this being anything you might be able to do yourself. It was the same with *Pong* – the game was fascinating because it was interactive, and making anything happen on your telescreen was interesting, but there was no sense I could fabricate a game myself.

When did that sense come to you?
When I famously went into the wrong room in sixth-form college and found a guy playing with a Commodore PET. I'd never seen a Commodore PET before – I'd just seen this weird thing that looked like a tele with a typewriter underneath it. I went to see what the guy was doing. He was playing a game and I asked where it had come from. He told me he'd typed it in. That idea you could type something in and make games sounded really good fun – I thought perhaps I'd better try and find out how to do that!

Until then, what were you considering as a career?
I'd been going through college, and my main strengths were Maths, Physics and English, which is an odd combination. I always thought I'd go and do Physics at university or maybe English, because I enjoyed writing. One thing that appealed about programming was it mixed these disciplines – it was almost like mathematical creative writing.

Was that balance of creativity and technical know-how important in your early gaming experiments?
In the early days, I enjoyed getting to know a machine inside-out, but you needed a hefty dose of creativity as well, otherwise you'd end up with stuff that's technically very good but not much fun to play!

When did you realise your hobby was becoming more than that?
It happened gradually. I got a ZX80 and then a ZX81. I'd taken some simple programs to a micro fair – I don't know why. Just to show other enthusiasts, I suppose. I was at this stand where they were selling memory expansion boards, and I was looking at a 16kB one I couldn't afford, but I got chatting to the guy, mentioned I had some programs I'd written, and loaded them up and showed them to him. He asked if I wanted to develop games for him, which he'd sell, and said "By the way, do you want a 16kB memory board to develop them on?" Somebody was willing to give me hardware, for stuff I'd written… that was a revelation to me. That's when I started to think maybe this wasn't just an obscure thing I was doing for my mates. In those days the home computer scene was only just emerging, and I really thought it was some nerdy hobby no-one else would be interested in.

You started out with straight ports of arcade games. Why did you then start moving towards doing something more unique?
I always wanted to do something with a bit of identity. I did a couple of



SELECTED TIMELINE

Deflex (VIC-20) 1981
Rat Man (VIC-20) 1982
Gridrunner (VIC-20/C64) 1982–3
Advance Of The Megacamels/ Attack Of The Mutant Camels (C64) 1983
Mutant Camels (C64) 1983
Hover Bovver (C64) 1983
Metagalactic Llamas Battle At The Edge of Time (VIC-20/C64) 1983–4
Ancipital (C64) 1984
Hellgate (VIC-20/C64) 1984
Psychedelia (VIC-20/C64) 1984
Sheep in Space (C64) 1984
Mama Llama (C64) 1985
Batalyx (C64) 1985
Iridis Alpha (C64) 1986
Return Of The Mutant Camels (C64) 1987
Voidrunner (C64) 1987
Super Gridrunner (Atari ST/Amiga) 1989–91
Llamatron: 2112 (Atari ST) 1991
Tempest 2000 (Atari Jaguar) 1994
Defender 2000 (Atari Jaguar) 1995
Gridrunner++ (Pocket PC/PC) 2002
Hover Bovver 2: Grand Theft Flymo (Pocket PC/PC) 2002
Neon (Xbox 360) 2005
Space Giraffe (Xbox 360) 2007
Gridrunner Revolution (PC) 2009
Minotaur Rescue (iOS) 2011
Minotron: 2112 (iOS) 2011
GoatUp (iOS) 2011
Gridrunner (iOS) 2012
Super Ox Wars (iOS) 2012

"Someone was willing to give me hardware for stuff I'd written... That was a revelation to me"

attempts at original games, stuff like *Rat Man*, which wasn't particularly good, but it was at least original. But I wanted to do arcade games and started out with that rubbish version of *Defender* on the VIC-20 with a massive ship. I quite fancied doing a *Centipede*-style game, but on the VIC-20 there were hundreds of versions and Atari was getting angry, placing ads in mags: "We're not going to put up with this any more!" But the more I went my own way, the more I enjoyed creating games. Although I'd often take the core of an arcade game as inspiration, I always liked turning it into my own thing.

Why did your games subsequently become filled with furry beasties?
I was into beasties before I got into computers! I was notorious for loving camels when I was in secondary school! But really you can blame them going into the games on *C&VG*. I'd played *Empire Strikes Back* on the VCS and quite enjoyed it, and I saw the *C&VG* review where they described the walkers as giant mechanical camels. I thought "I like camels!" and that you could do a game like that. It might be silly, but it would be fun. At the time, I'd just got a Commodore 64 and thought it'd be a good opportunity to put the machine's sprites to a bit of a test.

Did the beasties prove beneficial?
Yeah – people started to know me as the 'camel guy' and it seemed natural to continue my fascination with furry beasties and make them elements in more games. I was finding an identity no-one else was using and that served us very well. We became known as Llamasoft and people could recognise my games immediately just by looking at them. "There's a flying sheep – must be one of Jeff's games!"

Sound was also a big thing in your early creations, wasn't it?
Well, back in those days, you had to do everything procedurally on the sound chip and I liked that kind of thing. It was easy to make complex sound effects with simple bits of code, and I'd always admired sound effects in Williams games, which were made in a quite similar way. I tried my best to get that same metallic vibrancy out of systems that I had to hand. The VIC-20 was particularly good at this – it had a very nice sound generator you could get crunchy, metallic sound effects out of. I sometimes sample my own VIC-20 games to use in new iOS games!

* FIVE TO PLAY

Jeff apparently has 'hundreds of "favourite" games', but all the games below are ones that he would be happy to be stranded on a desert island with…

SPACE GIRAFFE



AS JEFF WRYLY notes, *Space Giraffe* was "not as universally liked as *Tempest 2000*," but he nonetheless thinks it's "possibly the best game I've ever made," finally melding his love of shooters and light-synths. The game was scorned by some for the level of on-screen visual noise, but Jeff reckons it puts you into a different state of mind: "It pushes you into an altered state, and it's a long game – a journey. It's kind of a four-hour trip in its own way, but a very safe one!" On the game's divisive nature, he reckons "some of the best work is divisive" and recalls the reviews: "*Space Giraffe* simultaneously got me the best and worst reviews of my life. At least people were taking notice of it. If people were putting that much emotion into the game, either way, at least you made them feel something!"

TEMPEST 2000



ON PLAYING *TEMPEST 2000* today, it's incredible to think this was Jeff's first game that utilised vectors and polygons. The game takes Dave Theurer's 1981 classic and somehow manages to improve it, with a number of power-ups, trippy effects, and varied enemies and web designs. "I was a bit scared at the time because it was such a classic design and there had never really been a decent home version of it, and I'd only ever worked with sprites and tile-maps up to that point. It was all new ground to me," affirms Jeff, adding, modestly: "In the end, it all came out really nicely."

LLAMATRON/MINOTRON



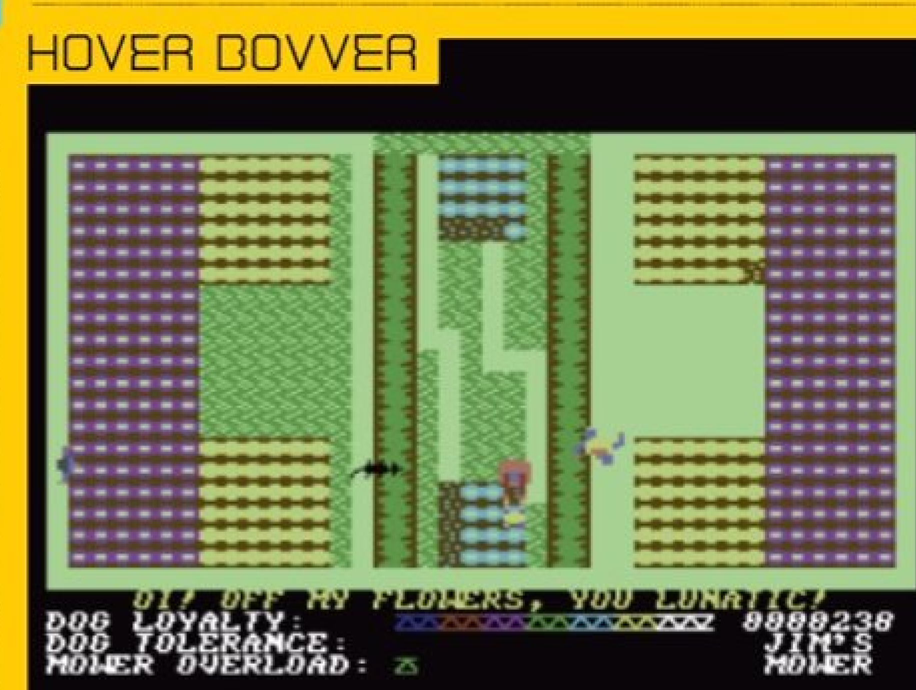
JEFF'S TWIN-STICK classic takes the essence of *Robotron* but introduces quirky British humour. "And it's nowhere near as fierce as *Robotron*, so you don't need to be a mega twin-stick hero to play it," he adds. *Minotron* on iOS utilises Jeff's continue system, enabling hardcore gamers to play all the way through but anyone to "just dip in every now and again to push your 'resume best' up a bit", and *Llamatron* on the Atari ST introduced shareware to the UK. "I thought magazine covermounts could be a good way to get distribution. The response was exceptional."

GRIDRUNNER



JEFF'S TAKE ON *Centipede* soon became something else entirely – more frenetic than the original, with a claustrophobic feel akin to *Robotron*. "It's one of my longest-lived games – over 30 years old – and there are various ways in which you can play it. But the essence of it was good right from the start, with a certain amount of juiciness in the VIC-20 version," thinks Jeff. The game's origins started with the grid and he kept adding elements, such as the zappers, to be "more sci-fi". In the end, Jeff says that although *Gridrunner* was a *Centipede* game at heart, "it definitely had its own characteristic look and feel".

HOVER BOVVER



ALTHOUGH JEFF MOSTLY makes shoot-'em-ups, he has dabbled in other genres. *Hover Bovver* is perhaps described as a gardening-oriented *Pac-Man*, with the hero frantically trying to mow lawns while pursued by an angry dog and an even angrier neighbour. (He's the guy whose mower's been pinched, see?) "*Hover Bovver* is one of my favourite games, and I've got very fond memories of it, because me and my dad designed it together," says Jeff. "It's a very silly game, and it's got a very gentle kind of British humour to it. It's also a very good example of my work that shows I can do more than just shoot-'em-ups."

> "The computer shows are what I miss most from the old days. They were fantastic"

As Llamasoft grew, was it hard to run a company and make games?
I wasn't really doing all the other stuff. My family were pitching in to a large degree. The day-to-day business side of it was more or less held together by my mum, and my dad helped out at shows and game testing – he loved games. All my brothers would help when we did computer shows. There was never any sense of me being left on my own to look after things. In fact, I'd say I had a pretty easy time of it because I could mostly just concentrate on knuckling down, writing the games.

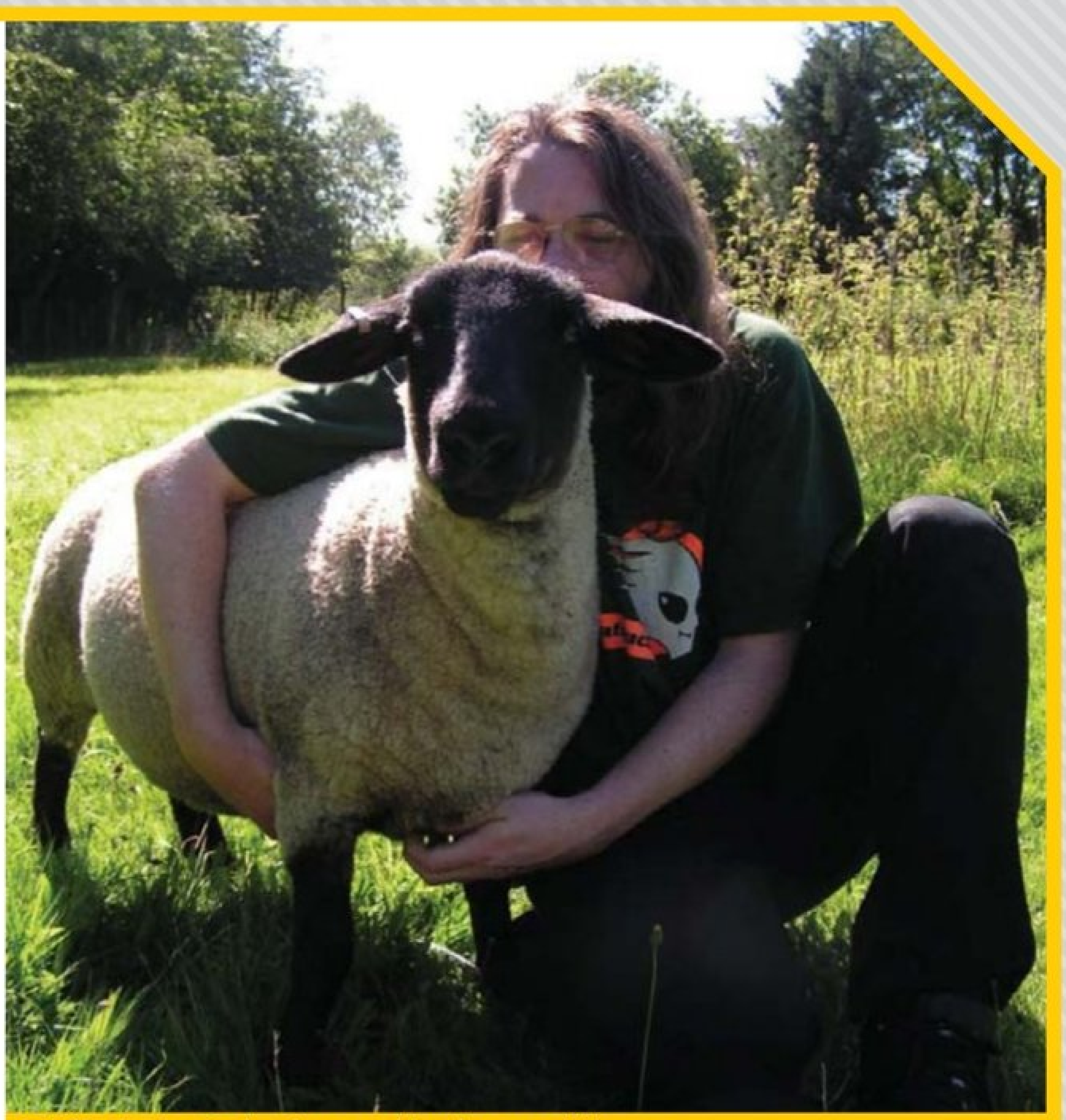
How important were the computer shows to you?
They're what I miss most from the old days. They were fantastic and became this kind of social thing. We weren't there for the hard sell – we'd set up the games, play music and let people hang out on our stand. In the evenings, we'd go to the arcades. It was a really nice point of contact between the people who played the games and me making them. It really made it feel a lot more personal.

With your games, why have you concentrated on shoot-'em-ups?

I just like the way they flow. I like the feeling when you get 'into the zone', in that place where it's like a very precise and delicate dance between you and the game.

Given that, where did the fascination with light-synths – almost the polar opposite of breakneck shooters – come from?
I was well known for being into Pink Floyd, which always had lots of visuals with it. I remember even at university having ideas about some kind of trippy graphics generator, but not really knowing what it was. Later, during my C64 days, I was out for a run and remember this algorithm popping into my head. I got home and coded it into the Commodore 64 and it just looked really good. At first, I thought this basic light-synth would be spoiled by the act of selling it, and so I gave it away as a listing to various magazines. But my parents convinced me to do a commercial version, which became *Psychedelia*. And as hardware rapidly evolved, there were opportunities to improve it – more colour, higher definition, finer controls. It became a thread throughout my entire career, and I'd always dreamed of making it work with a game, which I eventually got to do with *Space Giraffe*.

On technology evolving, how hard was the transition from 8-bit?
I remember initially being daunted by Atari ST documentation. It was all oriented towards C, but I was a pure assembly language programmer. Once I got comfortable with that, the 16-bits were in some ways liberating, because you had more power, resolution and colour, but people also started to place more emphasis on graphics. Big companies would employ graphic artists, and when you look at my games compared to theirs, the difference is fairly painfully obvious! So I carried on focusing on gameplay and got more into procedural effects, with ideas from light-synths crossing over into the games. I figured I'd at least have good gameplay and interesting effects when I couldn't have good artwork all of the time.



» Jeff has been keeping sheep for years and they often crop up in his games.

How did you end up at Atari?
They'd always liked me, and I was one of the earliest supporters of the ST. Commodore had been a bit shitty at the time about positioning the Amiga as a games machine and not being interested in getting games people involved with early systems, whereas Atari made it really easy. I worked on a console called the Panther for a couple of months, but they killed the system, which was disappointing. Then some Falcons were on the way to a show in Hanover and Atari asked if I wanted a look. I went in and they introduced me to the designer, who turned out to be my old mate from school, Richard Miller. At school, he didn't seem to have much interest in computers, but he'd gone into hardware engineering and ended up at Atari! So I did a little bit of work on that, but they also had this new system called the Jaguar. I went to a dev conference, and at the end they read out a list of IP that they had the rights to, asking if anyone was interested in doing a Jaguar update. The name *Tempest* came up and I went "Yeah I'll do that!" which was a bit scary because I'd never done any polygonal games or anything remotely 3D, but I thought: "I love *Tempest*. I want to have a go at this!"



» [C64] Sheep are great, but we're pretty sure spaceships don't have to munch grass to refuel.

It was a game that hadn't done well previously in the home...
Tempest was notoriously hard to get right – doing the transforms and drawing the lines was too slow on old machines, and the resolution was too low. The game depended on fairly clean lines and when you had pixels the size of house bricks, it didn't look good at all. I pity the poor sod who was given the task of doing *Tempest* on the Atari 2600! It looks like a pair of underpants with a prawn on it.

***Tempest 2000*, though, became a classic. How was it to work on?**
I really enjoyed *Tempest 2000*. It was a fusion of excellent parts – it wasn't just the code that was good. The music was exceptional as well, plus the original IP was a great starting point. *Tempest* is one of the classic shooters of all time. And because *Tempest* was abstract in the first

* NUMBER CRUNCHING

95: Iridis Alpha's percentage score in issue 18 of Zzap!64. "The best shoot-'em-up on the 64," enthused Julian Rignall

69: The price in pence that Jeff thinks could be the undoing of the iOS games ecosystem

68: The Metacritic score for the divisive Space Giraffe. Individual scores ranged from perfect, all the way down to Official Xbox Magazine's 2/10

30: The years between the first (VIC-20) and most recent version of Gridrunner (iOS)

16: The size of the ZX81 RAM pack in kilobytes that Jeff was given at a trade show

8: The number of Llamasoft games on C64 compilation Yak's Progress, priced at the time at just £9.50

6: Subgames in C64 classic Batalyx, which we really want Jeff to remake for iOS

1: The amount in kilobytes of 6502 assembler code that housed the original version of the trippy Psychedelia light-synth

place, it gave me free range to start playing with some effects on the Jaguar, such as shattering stuff into pixels, feedback and stuff like that. I could go crazy with those things. It all fitted together really well – everyone working on the game was really into it, and I had an excellent producer, John Skrutch, who knew just how to apply the right amount of pressure to get me to go in the right direction.

What do you think about the rest of your Jaguar output?
Well, there was the VLM, which I really enjoyed doing. It was the first active version of the visualizer I'd done, because everything else had been driven by the user. This time, it was in part driven by the music. Leonard Tramiel was really into it – I'd come into work and he'd be in my cubicle, playing Beethoven on the VLM! And then there was *Defender 2000*… I wasn't as fond of that as I was of *Tempest 2000*. At the time, I was an employee of Atari and I think they pushed me a little bit hard in certain directions I didn't really want to go in. At first, it was going to be a cartridge game, and then they decided they wanted to put it on CD-ROM. Because of that, they wanted a lot of hand-drawn artwork, big sprites and parallax layers. What I'd wanted to do was more like the Defender Plus mode, where it still retains the small graphics from the original game, but with plasma effects in the background. Instead, you got a game where the ship was too big and everything else was too big. It was still nice enough, but I think it could have been better if I'd been a bit less pushed [laughs].



» [C64] Activation of *Iridis Base* in C64 classic Batalyx, which we'd dearly love to see on iOS.


» [C64] HES passed on *ROTMC*, presumably because the quirky British humour didn't translate.

After a bit of work on the Nuon, you returned to the PC for a bit. Was this an attempt to work on a more robust platform?
My PC games at that time weren't actually made for the PC specifically – they were made for the Pocket PC. I quite fancied doing something on a handheld device. Even though the market wasn't very big, there was a simulator you could run on the PC, and it was fast enough that you could release games that way. So I'd write the one game and get the Pocket PC version and a PC one running in a window, for free. Really, though, I wanted to do some fairly short projects. Having been working on games that took a long time, it was nice doing ones that were over in a month or two.

Yet you then dived into *Unity* for the GameCube! What was the story there?
It was an ambitious experimental project that was a nice idea, but it was just taking too long. It needed a bigger team than just me, to get everything done in a timely manner. By the time I'd been doing *Unity* for a year and a half, we realised that the GameCube would probably have been obsolete by the time I was done.

> "The GameCube would probably have been obsolete by the time Unity was done"



» [VIC-20] Early effort *Andes Attack* is a basic arcade clone. He rapidly ditched such straightforward endeavours.

What did the game itself entail?
One of the underlying ideas was you'd start out with a simple ship. As you played, the way you'd play would cause your ship to evolve. There was a grid of mutations you could pick from between levels. There were going to be certain types of gameplay that connected levels. One of them was like a 3Dish, side-on, side-scrolling thing. Polygonal 3D. It was all very translucent. There were other sections a bit like *Space Giraffe*. It was nice-looking, but I wanted to do so much with procedural, generative stuff, and it needed more than just me doing it. I certainly count *Unity* as a good learning experience, though, and I don't regret working on it, even though the game didn't come out.

How did you end up working with Microsoft after GameCube's *Unity* was cancelled?
It turned out J Allard liked a lot of my work, the light-synth stuff in particular. He'd tried to contact me about doing something for the original Xbox boot-up sequence, but for some reason I'd missed the mail, so I never knew about it. So this idea was passed on to him about me doing light-synth stuff for the Xbox 360. Microsoft got me a dev kit and I did a demo and went out there and showed it at the Xbox 360 team's Christmas party. This was well before the Xbox 360 was released, so it was all secret stuff. They liked the demo, and we got a contract from there, for what became *Neon*. It would have been nice if I'd have got 10p per system sold [laughs] but I was told it was very much work-for-hire! There were also supposed to be more stages for it and a downloadable editor, and I was going to do some work with the Xbox 360 camera. We did create an extension to *Neon*, which uses a videocamera, and it's

utterly fantastic, but Microsoft never took it and ended up bunging their own half-arsed stuff on top of *Neon* instead. I was kind of miffed about that, because what we did was way better.

Presumably, though, *Neon* opened the door to *Space Giraffe*?
Yeah – there was a guy involved with Xbox Live Arcade, and he emailed and said he'd wanted to work with me for years. I thought that all sounded really cool. He showed me XBLA and we played *Robotron*, which was one of the games on there at the time. I got a dev kit, and went off and did *Space Giraffe*. It took a year and a half. It was a long project, but I think it's one of the best things I've ever done.

It's also one of the most divisive, and so why do you consider it a core Minter experience?
It's the way in which it brings together the game and the light-synth stuff. It uses all the light-synth effects as a mode of introducing difficulty to the game. Some people really objected to me deliberately creating this kind of visual noise and that you needed to look through that to get to the visual cues, but it's almost a game about learning to let go and "Use the force, Luke!"



» Jeff's retro machine room. It's an awesome cavern of classics that would put many collections to shame.

What initially appealed about the iOS platform?

I was attracted to the idea of doing something with a shorter development cycle. If you do something for a month and people don't like it, it's less risky than if you've spent a year and a half on something people don't like.

How was it dealing with a system that lacked the traditional controls your games had relied on?
That was what initially put me off of iOS development – I'd not played a single game I enjoyed the feel of, and was wondering if it was actually possible to do good controls on an iOS device. I started to experiment and realised it wasn't impossible – it just takes a bit of care. You've got to consider the device, how best to use it, and get people past this idea of needing things on the screen. You don't need to see controls – you can tell what you're doing with each hand, and so you don't need anything visually nor anything in a fixed place. You just need to understand game design and what the hands and controls are doing, and you should put as much of that into the game itself as you can – make the game understand those things without forcing the player to have to stick their fingers in a particular place.

How do you go about working on controls for your iOS games?
When I get the idea for a game, I first get the player character in there and hook up controls. As the rest of the game is built up, I'm constantly using, feeling and refining the controls. The worst thing you can do is the opposite – slap controls on right at the end.

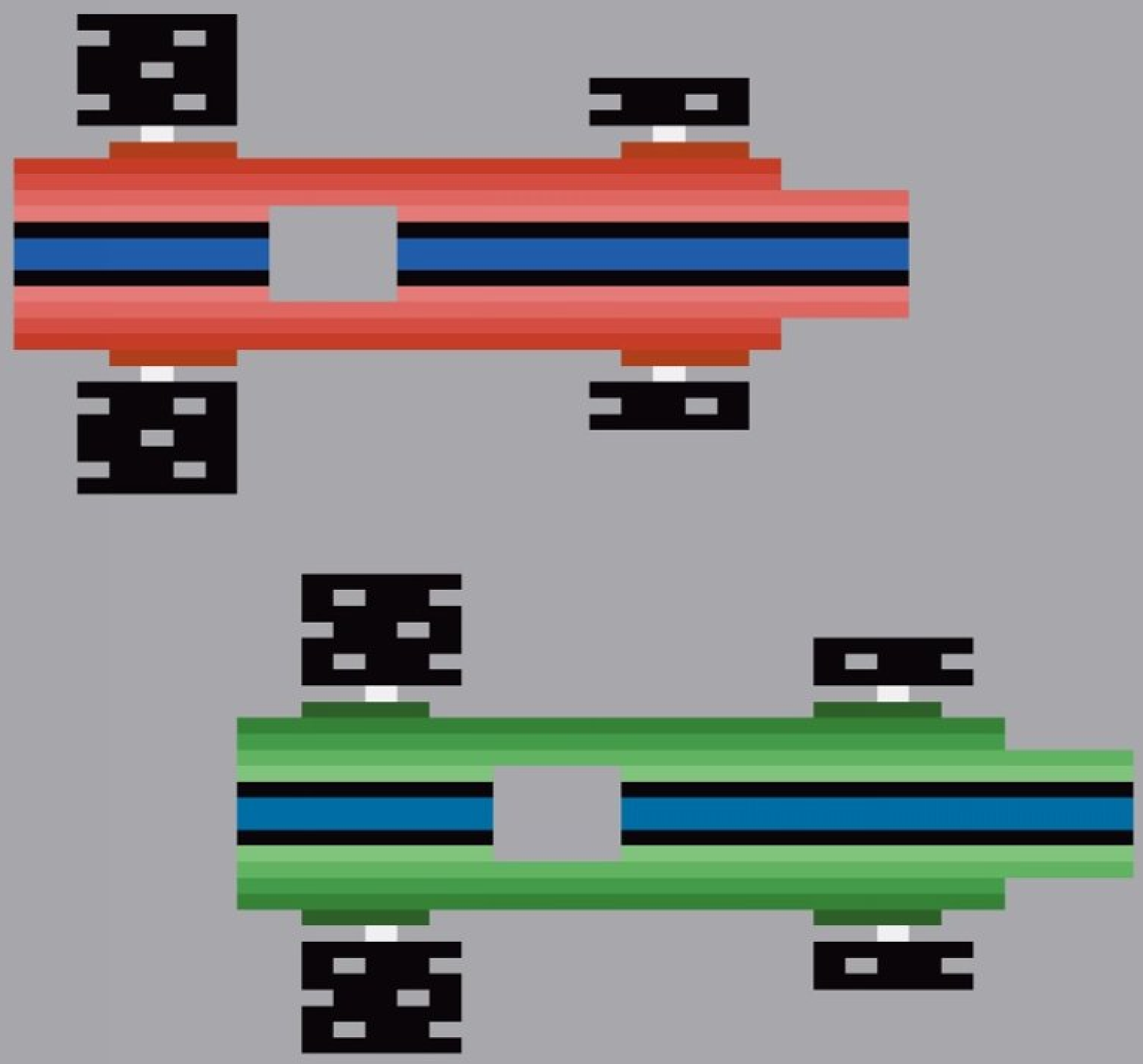
Do you feel that there is a downside to developing a game for iOS?
It's hard to make a living. There has to be some kind of move away from the 69p price-point. 69p is a terrible thing that in the long run's going to do more harm than good. I would like to see an establishment of a price-point a bit higher than that, around the price of a pint. The trouble with 69p is the only people who do well with it are already well known or those who get lucky and their game goes viral. In the 69p zone, you're effectively playing the lottery.



» [iOS] *Minotaur Rescue*, of the Minotaur Project, bringing Jeff's 'modern retro' games to iOS, OS X, PC and Android.

If you struck it rich and won the lottery, how do you think that would affect your games? Do you even think it would?
This is another of my pet bug-bears: when people are successful and they then spend the next who-knows-how-many-years remaking the same one game. What kind of lesson is that? Great success leads to stagnation! If I had lots of money and didn't have to care about it, I'd let my imagination run crazy and try all kinds of mad experimental stuff. That's the point isn't it, rather than developing a cash cow and milking it until it drops dead? I'd do more work on the light-synth, for sure. I'd do all kinds of games with interesting mechanics. I'd hope they'd all be good, but I'd feel less constrained perhaps than I do at the moment.

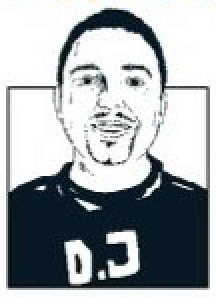
So your advice for anyone interested in getting into games is very simply to be more creative, would you say?
Make the things you want to exist. That's always been my prime motivation in games. Yes, I've wanted to make a living out of it, but really I've wanted to make the games that I want to play. I think as long as you're doing that, you'll be happy and you'll make good stuff.



RETROREVIVAL

Grand Prix

FORMULA 1 HAS NEVER BEEN SO MUCH FUN



» ATARI 2600
» ACTIVISION
» 1982

Play *Grand Prix* today and it remains as thrilling as it did in 1982. Not a bad achievement for a game that is now three decades old.

Of course the main secret to *Grand Prix*'s success was its talented designer David Crane, who, fresh from co-forming Activision, was trying all sorts of crazy programming tricks to push the Atari 2600 and subsequently his new racing game, as far as possible. David kindly gave us a full account of his impressive achievements in issue 100, but suffice to say even seemingly innocuous things like animating tyres or modifying the cars of opponents when they moved off screen proved to be a tremendous challenge for the talented programmer.

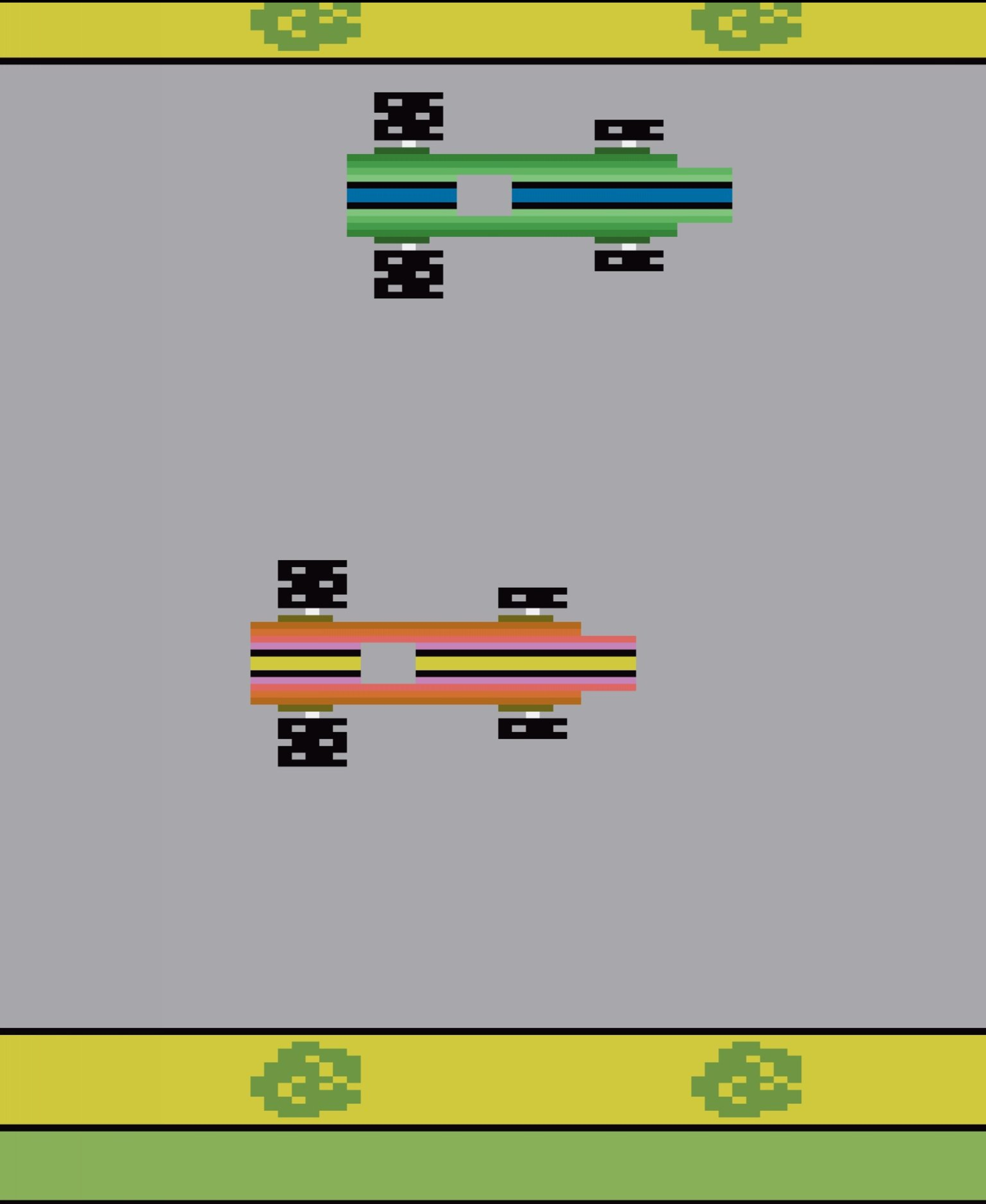
David was more than up to the task, though, and the end result is a truly excellent thrill ride, which tests your reactions to the limit and is still a joy to play today. In *Grand Prix* your only opponent (not including the numerous cars you continually race past) is time itself. You need to reach the finish line as quickly as possible, while avoiding incoming traffic, which gets faster and denser as you build up speed. Throw in the occasional oil spill that will slide you temporarily off course, and *Grand Prix* becomes incredibly addictive fun.

It's a tremendously satisfying game to play as well thanks to its finely honed controls that leave very little for anything other than human error. You'll constantly chastise yourself for clumsily driving into a patch of incoming traffic due to your own inept driving, but you'll nevertheless start all over again once you reach *Grand Prix*'s finish line and see how poor your final time is. That's how much of a hold David's game has on you.

Grand Prix's difficulty is set across four courses: Watkin's Glen, Brand's Hatch, LeMans and Monaco. Oil spills and cars become more frequent, while later courses introduce bridges, which force you to traverse a narrow section barely wider than your vehicle for a precious few milliseconds.

Do not be fooled by *Grand Prix*'s chunky aesthetics. It's an absolutely mesmerising beauty in motion and proves that the simplest gaming concepts are always the best.





RETRORATED



>> The Wii U's just been released and we've had our first proper taste of Nintendo's exciting new console. Elsewhere we take Retro City Rampage for a spin and find out if the ports of Doom 3 and Painkiller: Hell & Damnation are up to task…

PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
Doom 3: BFG Edition
It's not the best port and it's showing its age now, but *Doom 3* still scares me to hell.



STUART
Nintendo Land
Some mini-games are better than others, but *Nintendo Land* is still fun to play and a good showcase for the Wii U tech.



DAVID
Retro City Rampage
The gameplay gets samey towards the end, but it remains a loving nod to retro's past.



Nintendo Land

FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** WII U
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £49.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-5

BRIEF HISTORY

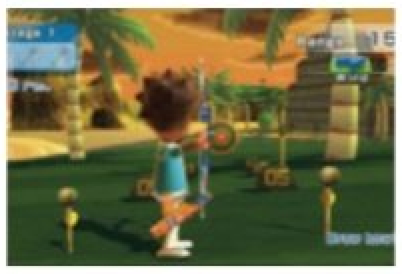
» A completely new franchise for Nintendo, though one which admittedly on the surface does seem to share a strong link to its successful *Wii Sports* series, *Nintendo Land* was sort-of demoed alongside the Wii U at E3 2011. There, some of the mini-games were demonstrated to attendees as Mii-starring tech demos.

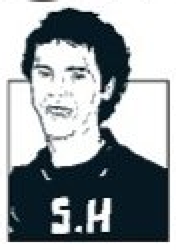
WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
FIENDISH FREDDY'S BIG TOP O'FUN



▼ SOMETHING NEW
WII SPORTS RESORT





Moments of *Nintendo Land* deliver that classic Nintendo magic. Get some friends huddled round a television playing Mario Chase – a stupidly simple mini-game that sees players working together to catch a Mii dressed up as Mario around a colour-coded arena – and voices quickly become raised, smiles stick, and all worries are quickly forgotten about.

The same can be said about Luigi's Ghost Mansion, which sees the player with the Game Pad playing a ghost who must capture the other players while trying not to get caught in the beams of their flashlights. It's tense, atmospheric and good fun, and the more people involved, the better these games become. But this is *Nintendo Land*'s biggest (and foreseeable) shortcoming: it's tremendously entertaining with mates, but less so alone. Its power is in numbers.

Nintendo Land features a total of 12 mini-games all based on Nintendo franchises. The games fall into three distinct flavours: Team, Competitive and Solo, with Team and Competitive games supporting up to five players (one player using the Game Pad while the rest use Wiimotes, sometimes with Nunchucks). As tends to be par for the course with minigame compendiums, some games are better than others.

Animal Crossing: Sweet Day serves up some fun moments in multiplayer. It sees players controlling animals and collecting up sweets, while two guards (both controlled by the Game Pad user) race to catch them. The more sweets collected, the slower the animals become, so the tension really mounts for both sides when there are just a few left to grab.

The Legend Of Zelda Battle Quest, Metroid Blast and Pikmin Adventure are more combat-oriented games. Pikmin Adventure we found to be the least impressive of the three. It's basically a cute hack-and-slash. Metroid Blast offers some fun – albeit basic – arena style gunplay, with stages either requiring you to working together to clear waves of enemies or collect tokens. Alternatively, players with the Wiimotes (playing Miis dressed in Samus suits) can play deathmatches against the player with the Game Pad, who controls Samus's gunship.

Battle Quest sees players battling through forest and dungeon stages together as Links, with up to four players armed with

» [Wii U] Pikmin Adventure is a odd one, in that it's a cutesy hack-and-slash with little connection to the core gameplay of series.





» [Wii U] Chase and Luigi's Ghost Mansion are the standout multiplayer games, simple but genuinely entertaining party games.



» [Wii U] Metroid Blast offers arena-style deathmatch and cooperative wave modes.

✱ GO DEEPER

>> It features 12 different mini-games based on Nintendo franchises – ranging from the obvious (*The Legend Of Zelda*) to the obscure (*Takamaru's Ninja Castle*)

>> It will be a pack-in with Wii U premium bundles in Europe and North America







All the fun of the lobby

Nintendo Land's mini-games are presented as attractions and the hub world a colourful theme park. However, this idea, while neat, feels a bit wasted on account of the theme park being little more than a simple circular arena with the minigame entrances sitting on its circumference. That's it, nothing more, nothing less. It feels more like a lobby. We would have liked Nintendo to have done something more ambitious, and include a few things to see and do away from the mini-games. We're not even asking for anything too strenuous either: A movie theatre showing some old Nintendo commercials or best replays perhaps?

swords (which can be swung Skyward Sword style) while the Game Pad user plays the role of archer, attacking by pulling the right control stick back to fire arrows. It's fun and gets surprisingly challenging, but as enemies get repeated and character movement is on rails, so the action does start to feel very similar.

Given that they are played entirely with the Game Pad, you would think the solo games would provide the best showcases for the Wii U's functionality. And while a few do, most don't. Balloon Trip Breeze is, well, basically a pretty looking version of Balloon Fight's Trip mode, except you guide your Balloon Fighter through the sky by creating breezes with the stylus. Takamuru's Ninja Castle is a fun but simple shooting game clearly aimed at younger gamers, and involves rubbing the Game Pad screen with your finger to launch Shurikens at the screen to attack origami ninjas.

Considering the potential of the franchise it's based on, Captain Falcon's Twister Race is the most disappointing of the 12 games on offer. It sees you holding the Game Pad vertically and steering your craft by tilting it left and right to avoid obstacles, round corners and hit speed boosts to maintain speed. Again, there's not really much to it but, worse still, it lacks the speed and exhilaration the *F-Zero* series is famed for. But the lame duck is Octopus Dance, a rhythm action memory game that involves repeating the dance moves performed by a diver by shaking and tilting the Game Pad and pressing the analog sticks.

Donkey Kong's Crash Course and Yoshi's Fruit Cart are the gems, and do the best at showing the Game Pad in the most interesting light. The former is a taxing physics-based action game which involves getting a fragile trolley from A to B without smashing the egg-like Mii face it's carrying. You move the trolley by tilting the controller, and navigate it around the levels by activating switches, pulleys and lifts via various controller inputs and blowing into the mic. If you can imagine playing a videogame version of Screwball Scramble that's pretty much what it's feels like.

Yoshi's Fruit Cart is equally addictive and a puzzle game we could easily see translating brilliantly to DS. It is also the best showcase for how the Game Pad's touch screen display can work in good partnership with television screens. The telly displays a course of fruit for Yoshi to collect, and using the stylus you have to draw a route on the Game Pad screen. However, on the Game Pad screen the fruit is hidden from view. It's a genuinely fun and imaginative game, and feels like Nintendo's extremely late answer to *Chu Chu Rocket*.

While *Nintendo Land* isn't consistent in making the best use of its franchises, or demonstrating the potential of Wii U, it is still a fun and entertaining multiplayer game, one packed with variety and does at least try to offer something for everyone.

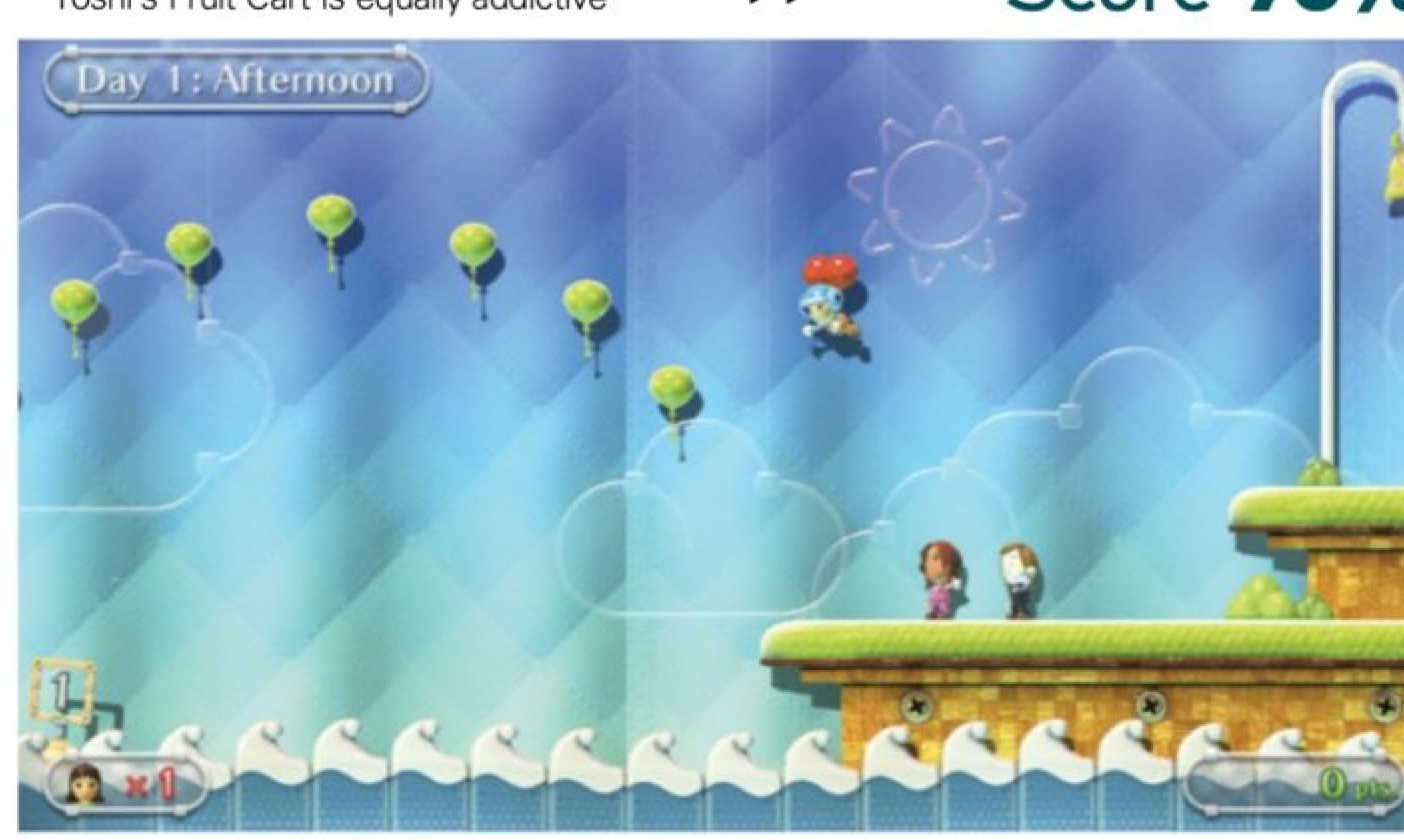
In a nutshell

Not quite the *Wii Sports* for Wii U. *Nintendo Land* is too much of a mixed bag, but one you'll be first to stick your hand into when entertaining.

>> Score **76%**

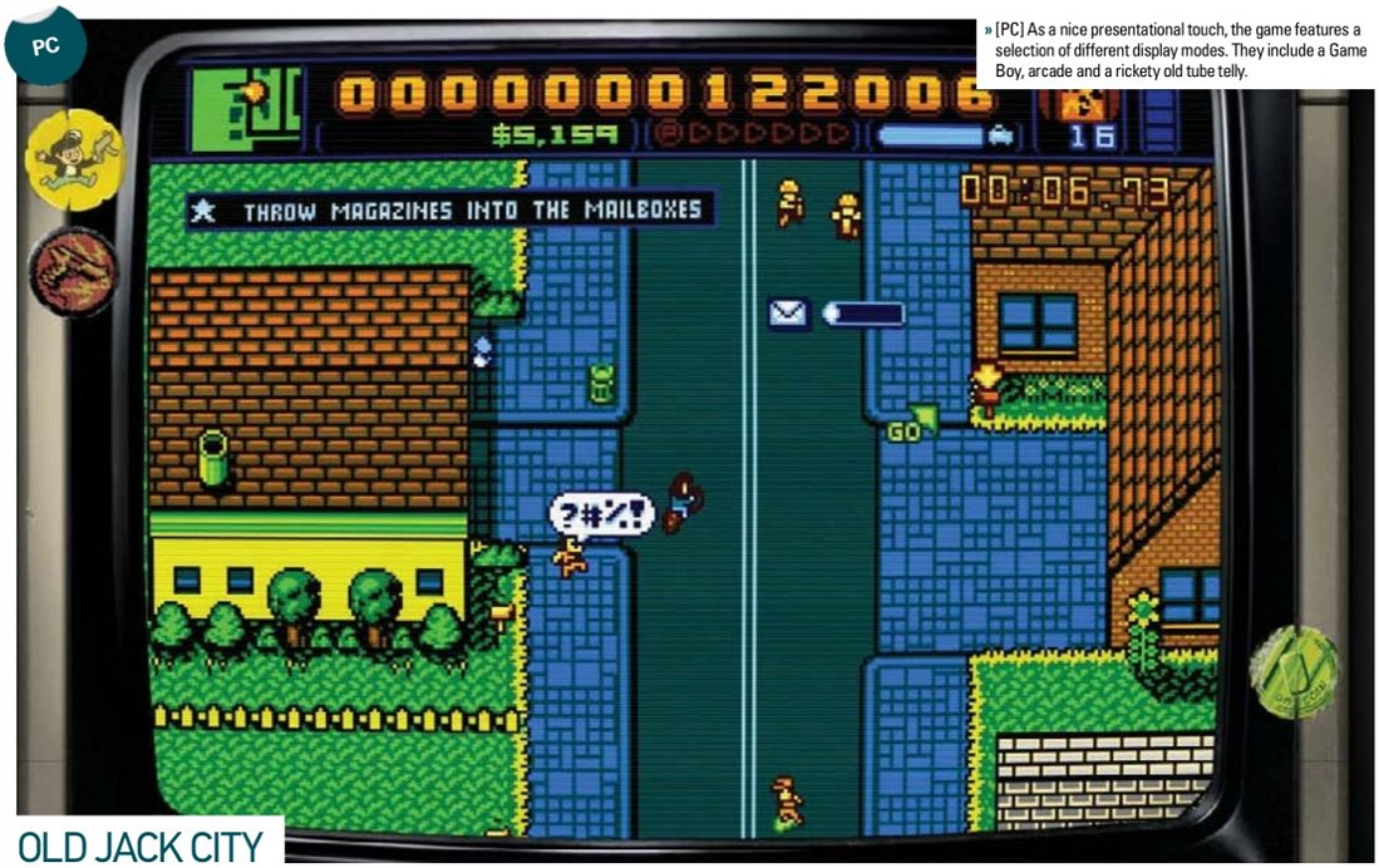


» [Wii U] Yoshi's Fruit Cart is easily one of the best single-player games if you're playing without friends.



» [Wii U] NES Classic *Balloon Fight* gets the Wii U treatment = steering your Balloon Fighter by creating gust of winds.

PC



» [PC] As a nice presentational touch, the game features a selection of different display modes. They include a Game Boy, arcade and a rickety old tube telly.

OLD JACK CITY

Retro City Rampage



***Retro City Rampage* started life in 2002 as a homebrew passion project to demake one of his all-time favourite games for his most cherished consoles (read: *GTA III* for the NES). Ten years later and his love letter to classic gaming is finally ready to be read.**

Sticking to its open world *GTA* roots (though dipping into other familiar gameplay styles as well), *Retro City Rampage* finds you in control of 'Player', a pea-sized henchman who has to dash and drive around the city of Theftopolis completing typical *GTA*-style missions – collect, kill and deliver, essentially – to get back home after accidentally getting stranded in the future.

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PC (STEAM)
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** XBOX 360, PS3, VITA
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £11.99 (STEAM)
- » **PUBLISHER:** VBLANK ENTERTAINMENT INC.
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

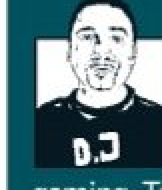
» [PC] *Retro City Rampage* sticks mainly to *GTA*-style gameplay, but does ape other gameplay styles.



The first few hours of *Retro City Rampage* are like stepping into at an old amusement arcade. You don't know which way to look as the familiar sights, sounds and nostalgia hit you thick and fast. In addition to the core story missions, there are 'arcade challenges' to play, which typically involve going on a destroying sprees, achievements to unlock, and shops to visit – you can pay a visit to Nolan's Arcade, get inked at Toadstool Tattoo or buy a new board at Skate 'n Buy.

The missions also pay tribute and poke fun at gaming and popular culture past. To give you some idea of the rambunctious level of parody to expect, within one 15-minute snapshot of gameplay we were flying in a raccoon suit, riding inside an *Impossible Mission*-style elevator, taking down waves of thugs, *Smash TV* style, and doing battle with a Dr Robotnik-style mad scientist.

OPINION



Retro City Rampage starts off brilliantly, with clever play mechanics and lots of lovely tributes to the halcyon days of gaming. Towards the end it does begin to run out of steam due to an over-reliance on certain missions and some crushingly hard difficulty spikes, but it remains an utterly charming game and the perfect love letter to the good old days.

Our biggest criticism we have is that we did find the fun, inventiveness and difficulty level of missions to be inconsistent, particularly towards the end where the game runs out of steam, falling into that typical *GTA* trap. But perhaps it's no surprise that a game that apes games from different consoles and generations feels a bit patchy in its pacing and design.

Despite this, *Retro City Rampage* remains an utterly amusing nostalgia-packed journey that we can't see many retro gamers not thoroughly enjoying.

In a nutshell

It's the gaming equivalent of *Spaceballs*. It not Oscarworthy stuff, but it does what it sets out to do with aplomb. A funny, fun and riotous ride of a game.

>> Score 78%



» [PC] *Retro City Rampage* is packed with gaming references; it's actually a little overwhelming at times.

★ GO DEEPER

The facts behind Retro City Rampage

>> There are plenty of mini-games and hidden Easter eggs to discover, including a *Super Meat Boy* spin-off on Virtual Boy.

>> As well as iconic games, the A-Team, Schwarzenegger and Stallone, and Ninja Turtles also cameo. We love the Eighties.

★ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD

RIVER CITY RAMPAGE



▽ SOMETHING NEW

GRAND THEFT AUTO IV



BRIEF HISTORY

» *Retro City Rampage* started life in 2002 as a *Grand Theft Auto III* demake for NES, named *Grand Theftendo*. But when attention in the project grew, its creator, Brian Provinciano, decided to expand the idea, and use *GTA* as the gaming glue to create a tongue-in-cheek tribute to classic games.



Giana Sisters: Twisted Dreams

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PC » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £12.99 » **PUBLISHER:** BLACK FOREST GAMES » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE » **PLAYERS:** 1

>> ***Giana Sisters* sticks** to the core platform credentials of the original 8-bit game, but adds plenty of clever twists. The majority of Giana's gameplay revolves around two personas. Cute Giana is able to twirl through the air to avoid numerous dangers, while Punk Giana has a dash attack that allows her to smash through enemies, walls and reach otherwise inaccessible areas. What's interesting here however is that switching between the two personas changes the levels themselves, which in turn activates new objects and areas. *Twisted Dreams* is a highly enjoyable platformer with gorgeous aesthetics, but it is very difficult.

>> Score **78%**

Under Defeat HD

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** XBOX 360 » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PS3 » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PUBLISHER:** RISING STAR GAMES » **DEVELOPER:** G.REV » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



>> **G.Rev knew better** than to simply rerelease its cult shooter with shinier visuals, so it has completely overhauled its original arcade game (which is also included) with a new widescreen mode that makes the most of modern TVs. The end result is a vastly re-jigged version of its original arcade game with new enemies to blast and a far higher difficulty challenge, ensuring it will take you many attempts before you finish *Under Defeat* on a single credit. The control system remains fiddly, and the scoring system isn't as complex as Cave's offerings, but it remains a highly entertaining blaster.

>> Score **84%**

RETROROUND-UP

>> Every month we take a look at the classics and latest releases that are available for current download services

DOWNLOAD OF THE MONTH

Okami HD



INFORMATION
» **System:** PS3
» **Buy it for:** £15.99
» **Buy it from:** PSN
» **Score:** ★★★★★

PS2 remakes have been extremely hit-and-miss over the past few years. For every *Ico* or *Shadow Of The Colossus* there is a *Silent Hill 2* or *Prince Of Persia*, so we were concerned about how *Okami* would turn out, especially as previous Capcom updates have been rather less than stellar.

Fortunately we needn't have worried, as *Okami HD* is very, very good. *Okami* was always a stunning looking game on PS2, but it's amazing just how good this new transfer looks. While some sections of it have been simply upscaled, Capcom and HexaDrive (who handled the excellent Xbox 360 port of *Rez HD*) have completely recreated *Okami*'s many cutscenes and retextured many areas of the game. The end result means *Okami* now looks more vibrant than ever, with distinctive bold lines that accentuate the game's distinctive design and new 16:9 widescreen display.

The controls are also superb, with HexaDrive making full use of the PS3's Move, giving *Okami HD* the same elegant control system that the Wii update originally used. Of course, purists will be pleased to hear that the original system is still in place as well, so if you never got on with the Wii version you can play it as you did on the PS2.

That leaves the game itself, which remains the best non-*Zelda* game we've ever played on a non-Nintendo system. Beautifully structured and filled with classic moments and memorable characters, it's a superb adventure that hasn't aged a jot in the past six years. The price feels a little high, but this is easily the best version of Capcom's classic adventure and is a great introduction to anyone who has never visited *Okami*'s beautiful world.

>> OTHER HIGHLIGHTS



Deadlight

» **System:** PC/Xbox Live
» **Buy it for:** £9.99/1200 Points (Xbox Live)
» **Buy it from:** www.steampowered.com
» **Score:** ★★★☆☆
» *Deadlight* is yet another zombie game, but it's one that takes the genre into a refreshing direction. Cross *Limbo* with *Flashback* and you'll have a good idea of what to expect from this stylish platformer, which has great atmosphere, a strong story and some clever level design. It's a pity then that *Deadlight* is let down by cumbersome controls, which become more apparent the further you get into the game.



Need For Speed: Most Wanted

» **System:** PS Vita
» **Buy it for:** £39.99
» **Buy it from:** PSN
» **Score:** ★★★★☆
» Make no mistake this may bear the *Need For Speed* name, but it's essentially an evolution of *Burnout Paradise*. That means *Most Wanted* is a superb arcade-style racer, albeit one that takes place in an open world, this time filled with ten elite drivers who must be taken down if you want to rule the streets of Fairhaven. The Vita version is a solid adaptation of the home versions, let down slightly by its controls.



DOOM 3: BFG Edition

» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** £19.99
» **Buy it from:** www.steampowered.com
» **Score:** ★★★★☆
» PC owners lose out, as this HD port doesn't look as good as the HD mod currently available. Get past this however, and *Doom 3* still proves to be a perfectly atmospheric shooter. The hectic frenzied blasting of the original has been replaced with a deliberately slow pace, an actual story and some genuine scares, but it doesn't make for a poor *Doom* experience. Just a different one. A solid port of three classic games.



Painkiller: Hell & Damnation

» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** £17.99
» **Buy it from:** www.steampowered.com
» **Score:** ★★★☆☆
» *Painkiller* is disappointing. While this HD update of the original game and its expansion *Battle Out Of Hell* looks lovely, it's at the expense of a juddering frame-rate, which occasionally impacts play. It's also frustratingly short, chopping off twenty of the levels found in the originals. Multiplayer is a welcome addition and the gunplay remains extremely satisfying, but this still feels rather lacking for an update.

Spy Hunter

» **System:** PS Vita » **Buy it for:** £34.99
» **Buy it from:** PSN » **Score:** ★★☆☆☆

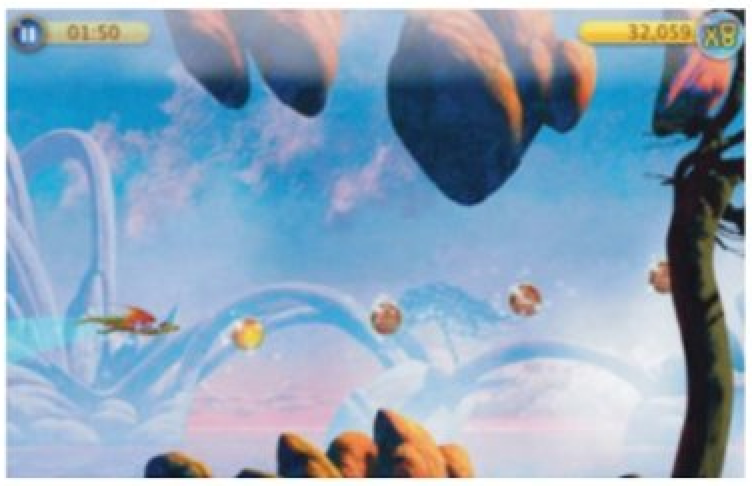
The best thing about *Spy Hunter* is its rendition of the Peter Gunn theme tune. After that it's all downhill. Graphically it's terrible, with bland PS2-style visuals that do little to show off the Vita's vibrant screen. The gameplay is equally woeful with boring missions that rarely deviate from 'blow up anything that moves' while the available weapons are incredibly lacklustre. Add in some really twitchy controls that make handling your hi-tech car a real chore – when it should be one of the highlights – and *Spy Hunter* becomes a travesty of a game that bangs a final nail in the coffin of a once great arcade game (which hasn't even been included).



Roger Dean's Dragon's Dream

» **System:** iOS » **Buy it for:** £2.99 » **Buy it from:** App Store » **Score:** ★★★☆☆

Roger Dean's stunning aesthetic art has been used to fuel a new iOS endless runner. *Dragon's Dream* has you controlling a cute dragon and flying as far as possible for two minutes (or until you hit something in the alternate game mode) through two glorious looking levels. The simple controls – touch the screen to make your dragon fly higher – feel sluggish at first, but get better as your dragon gains speed, while the smart scoring system requires you hit orbs to increase your multiplier. It looks gorgeous but there's a distinct lack of levels and challenge.



HOMEBREW

>> The scene's latest news and reviews

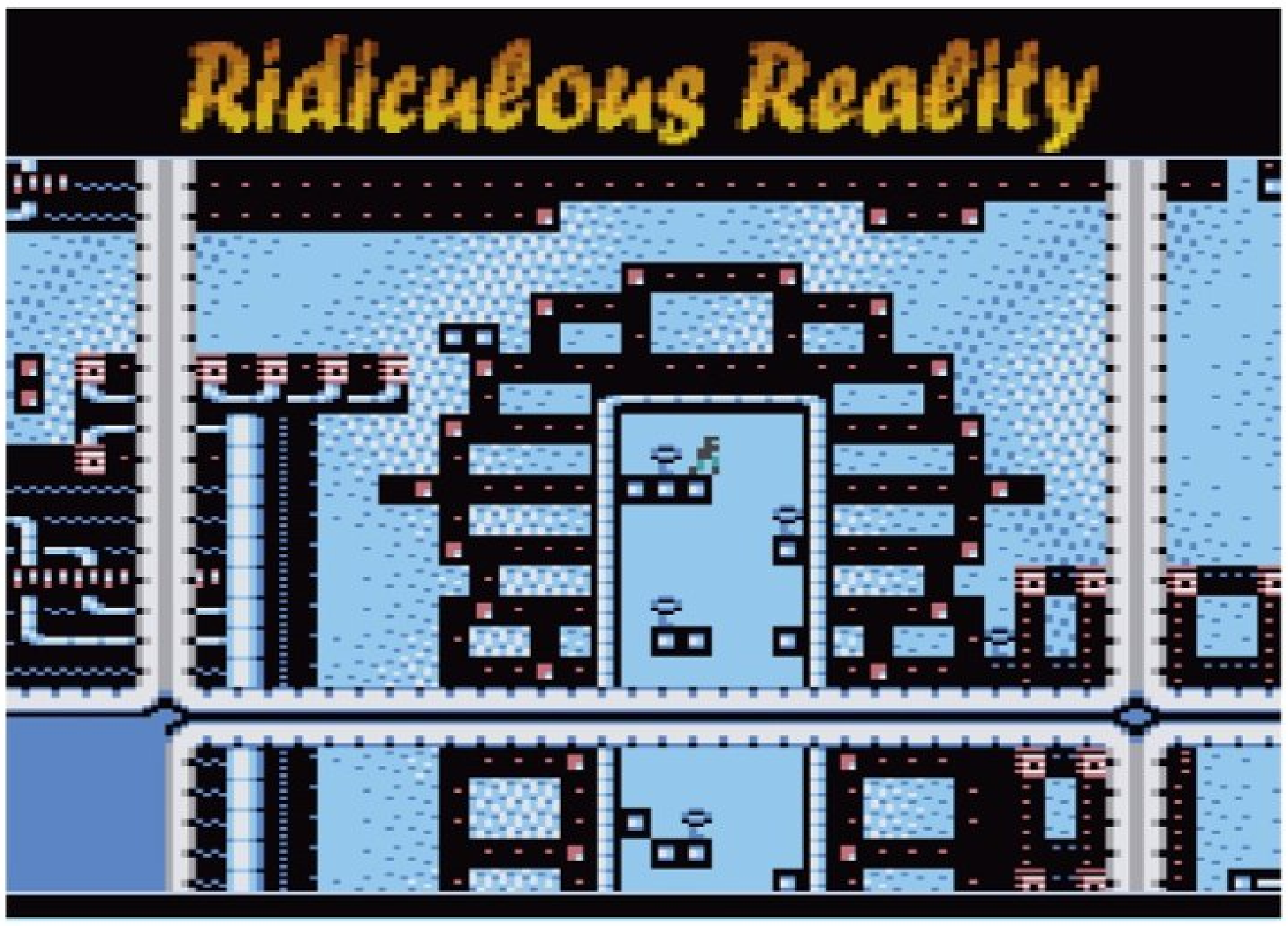


I'd like to begin by saying "Bah humbug", partly because I don't like the winter months but mostly because I'm writing this while suffering from what is either a cold or possibly the t-Virus from Resident Evil.

The Christmas period at least means an increase in homebrew game releases so I'll have something to keep me company on those long evenings from the MSXdev, C64 16K cartridge and ABBUC competitions

YOU SPIN ME RIGHT ROUND

RIDICULOUS REALITY





» [Atari 8-bit] I've got the key.



» [Atari 8-bit] Every day I'm shuffling.



FORMAT: ATARI 8-BIT
DEVELOPER: MATOSIMI
LINK: WWW.MATOSIMI.WEBSUPPORT.SK
RELEASE: 2012
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

Martin "MatoSimi" Simecek's *Ridiculous Reality* was released as part of the latest iteration of the Atari Bit Byter Club's annual software development competition. The game's design is influenced by the Flash game *Continuity* – which we enjoyed playing all the way back in issue 73 and is available to play online at www.kikstart.eu/continuity-flash or for iOs powered devices – but, rather than going for a straight copy and reproducing the minimal style of the original, the developer has taken the opportunity to rework the graphics and sound to take advantage of the Atari 8-bit while cramming the gameplay into a standard, unexpanded machine.

The objective on each stage is simply to collect the quota of keys before making for the exit. There aren't any enemies patrolling the screen to avoid on pain of death, no time limit threatening to expire and the game doesn't even worry about how many lives are lost during play. But, while that might sound incredibly easy, there is of course a catch: the level itself is divided into a series of cells which will need to be reorganised to create pathways to the keys and then doorway. As long as two adjacent edges match, the player's avatar can pass back and forth between cells without issue, but trying to cross non-matching edges will either stop the little chap in his tracks or, if he should fall down through the bottom of a cell, prove fatal and send him back to the last collected key.

Shuffling the layout of the level is surprisingly easy; holding the fire button down brings up a map showing all of the pieces in a layout similar to those sliding puzzles where a number of tiles are shuffled around with just one space available to move into. Tiles can be moved into the free space by pushing the joystick accordingly, with the larger versions in the play area itself shuffling around in the background as changes are made, then releasing the fire button returns control to the main game. The number of cells changes from stage to stage and the amount of transferring between tiles will increase as the levels become harder.

On the gameplay front, everything that made *Continuity* enjoyable as a game is present and correct with a healthy dose of Atari 8-bit graphics and sound on top; the player character is well animated for such a small object, different graphical styles and colour schemes are employed to delineate sets of levels and the various tunes playing in the background are very hummable.

We've always rather enjoyed MatoSimi's releases even as far back as action puzzler *Laser Blaster* from 2005, but *Ridiculous Reality* has to be the most accomplished game from the ABBUC competition regular and has set the bar high. This is certainly a contender for the best Atari 8-bit game of 2012.

92%



» [Atari 8-bit] Fresh air, countryside… floating keys?

NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

KNIGHTMARE ZX

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** CLIMACTUS AND MCNEIL
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/KNIGHTMARE-ZX » **PRICE:** FREE

Although it might share a name, Konami's 1986 title *Knightmare* actually predates Treguard and his dungeoneers. In this particular bad dream, the lovely Aphrodite has been kidnapped and the unnamed, heroic knight must deliver a kicking to the forces of darkness holed up in the delightfully named Demon Castle to get her back.

The quest is represented as a scrolling shoot-'em-up which replicates MSX-style character-at-a-time scrolling on the Spectrum; this means that the movement jumps eight pixels a time which initially seems jerky but most players won't notice in the heat of battle. An array of nasties has lined up to prevent Aphrodite's rescue but there are also power-ups that will help the knight along, increasing his firepower and shielding him from attack.

This conversion isn't perfect – some of the power-ups appear to have been misplaced – and there are a few issues with visibility on stages with darker colours, but *Knightmare ZX* is a reasonable version of a fun scrolling shoot-'em-up.

61%



» [Spectrum] Why online dating never works.





» [NES] Clowning around on the NES.

STREEMERZ

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** NES » **DEVELOPER:** FAUX GAME COMPANY
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.FAUXGAME.COM » **PRICE:** FREE

The original inspiration for *Streemerz* came from the infamous *Action 52* of all places when indie developer Mr. Podunkian took a couple of the original's elements and totally reworked them for a Flash-based science fiction-themed game; that reworking has now been ported back to the NES, looking and sounding significantly better than the title that inspired it!

Having placed an explosive charge on the main CPU, *Streemerz* operative Joe is stuck at the base of Master Y's flying fortress with the only escape being at the top, a task made significantly harder by his being unable to jump and needing to rely on a grappling hook to pull him upwards through the screens.

On the default difficulty this is extremely challenging but there are other options to experiment with including Easy and "Streeeeeemerz" mode that casts the player as Dr. Tary – the inventor of an ingenious device which inverts gravity – who must also escape the fortress to avoid Master Y's wrath.

82%

CRIMBO

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK
» **FORMAT:** SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** LITTLE SHOP OF PIXELS
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/CRIMBO-SPEC » **PRICE:** FREE

Since it's the festive season, we've pulled a cracker and found something from Christmas past to have a look at. Santa's little helpers have gone on strike on Christmas Eve and, as part of their protest, hidden all the presents. Only Santa himself can save the big day, but to do that he'll have to brave perilous, spike-filled rooms populated by deadly robins and fir trees to gather gifts before making his rounds.

While it might appear to be all cute and Christmassy, this is actually an extremely tough cookie which has some truly uncharitable collision detection teamed up with Grinch-like time limits for each stage. *Crimbo* probably isn't a game to leave the kids playing unless they've been quite naughty during the past year, but hardened platform fans will find it a more than adequate challenge to fill the gap between turkey and the *Doctor Who Christmas Special*.

80%

» [Spectrum] Trapped like a (mole) rat.



WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [Amstrad CPC] Cold war drama in eight bits.

» ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL

Fans of adventuring might want to examine the recently released conversion of Apple 2 Cold War-themed adventure *Le Mur De Berlin Va Sauter* for the Amstrad CPC… if they can read French. An English translation for the Amstrad should hopefully be under way by the time this sees print, but those who don't need to wait can look at www.tj.gpa.free.fr



» [Intellivision] How *DOTC* will look on an Intellivision.

» THE CROWN NEEDS DEFENDING AGAIN

There's an Intellivision version of Cinemaware's *Defender Of The Crown* that was started a few years back but never completed which is set to benefit from a Kickstarter campaign; permission has already been sought from Cinemaware and, if the required funds are raised, programmer Carl Mueller will be on the coding duties. Keep an eye on www.elektronite.com for more information.



» [Spectrum] Go, mister driver!

» THE MINDS OF DEVELOPERS

Finally, there's an excellent forum thread at the World of Spectrum where developers are showing their latest ideas! Despite most being prototypes, there are some great early screens and mock-ups, including some work-in-progress screens from Jarrod Bentley for a *Geometry Wars*-style blaster and a game that he describes as a cross between *Chase HQ* and *Spy Hunter*. www.kikstart.eu/ongoing-spec

HOMEBREW

>> The scene's latest news and reviews

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

>> OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND

With up to six computer-controlled or human players and local or network play support, *Atoms* is a puzzler designed along similar lines to games such as *Othello* where the players must compete against each other to take control of the board, although the gameplay is a little more complex and can't just be dived into; fortunately there's a tutorial mode included that explains the basics of gameplay for beginners. Head over to www.kikstart.eu/atoms-xblig to see *Atoms* in its cartoon styled glory and to download the demonstration version.



>> ROCKING IT

Moebius is a one-button game with a rocket travelling through horizontally scrolling landscapes; to steer its flight, players must hold the A button down to accelerate upwards or release it to let gravity do its work. There are of course many other examples of the genre on the XBLIG service and other platforms but this one does at least offer a four player split-screen mode. Fly over to www.kikstart.eu/moebius-xblig



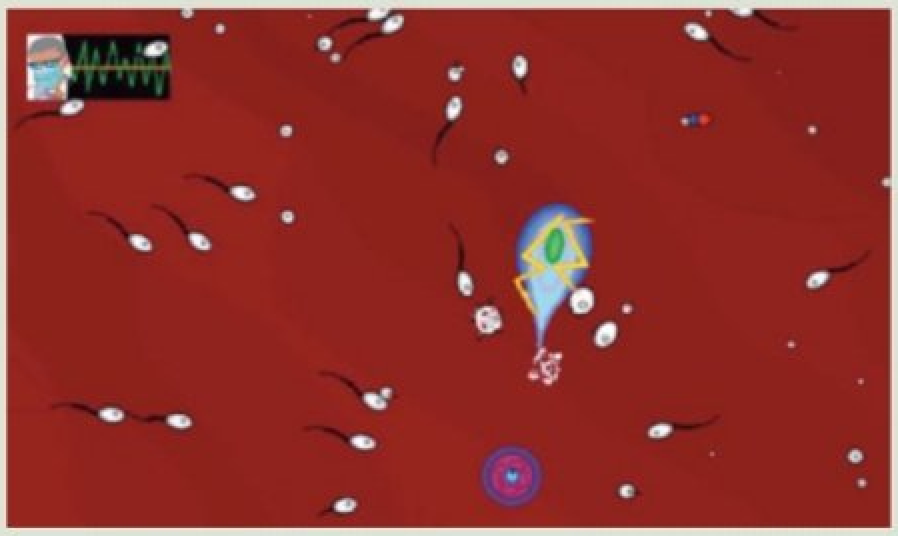
FLASH BOREDOM



Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on **Retro Gamer's** Flash game of the month. This month, **Heavenly Resistance**.

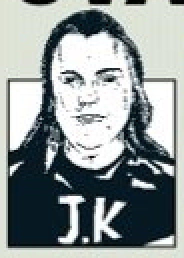
IT'S TIME FOR SOME OLD-SCHOOL SHOOTING ACTION AS YOU SELECT ONE OF THREE GENERIC PILOTS AND FLY INTO ENEMY TERRITORY WITH THE INTENTION OF BLOWING ALL HELL OUT OF ANYTHING THAT MOVES. THE DESTRUCTION EARNS SCORE AND TEMPORARY POWER UPS IN THIS SIMPLE BUT SLIGHTLY HYPNOTIC LITTLE MOUSE-CONTROLLED BLASTER. WWW.KIKSTART.EU/HEAVENLY-RES-FLASH

MORE GAMES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING. . .



OVARY OVERLOAD

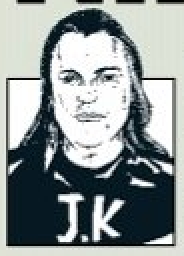
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/OVARY-XBLIG





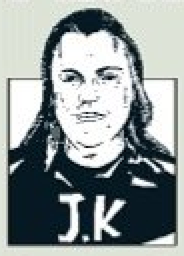
***Ovary Overload* might** be yet another twin stick shooter but it has a more sedate pace than many of the other examples on the Xbox Live Indie service and manages to at least have a little inventiveness in the story department. The player takes control of an egg in a womb and, using probably the most effective birth control ever devised, must keep it safe from the constant threat of insemination.

Handy advice is provided during play by an observing scientist, and the egg can also collect score multipliers and weapon upgrades, the latter making the process of survival a little easier. If an interloper should breach its defences there's always the option of waggling the control stick in order to shake it loose.



AIRRISE

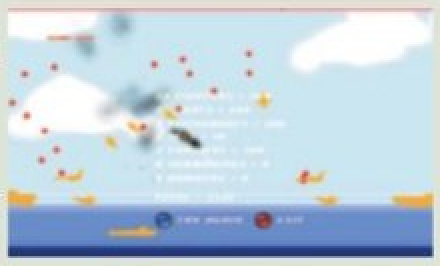
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/AIR-RISE-XBLIG



There is a top-secret prototype jet in need of testing and only one pilot is brave or possibly daft enough to do it.

The controls are simple to use, with the left thumb stick steering the plane and A firing the thrusters and, while gravity always pulls the plane downwards, it rather conveniently bounces off the water.

Drone enemies can be destroyed with the weapons, which are operated by the shoulder buttons and a certain amount of enemy fire can be soaked up by the regenerating shields. The primitive graphics partly hide a challenging but entertaining shoot-'em-up with an unusual control scheme and juggling all the factors to keep the plane flying and out of harm's way will take a little practise.



NINJA CRASH

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/NINJA-CRASH-XBLIG



The Ninja Master's coveted piece of cheese has been stolen by his enemies, so he calls on his faithful team of ninja warriors to retrieve it; they'll really have to use their skills and training for this mission because, like their enemies, they'll need to strap on magic lanterns and take to the skies.

Ninja Crash is reminiscent of the NES game *Balloon Fight* and, while the characters may be ninjas suspended from lanterns rather than men from balloons, the rules are pretty much the same; repeatedly stabbing the A button propels the ninja upwards through the air, the thumb stick moves him horizontally, and bumping into an opponent's lantern from above or skewering it with one of the throwing weapons that can occasionally be collected around the play area will break it. Enemies try to return the favour and if either player or nasty are left without a lantern to support them then they'll fall to the ground where, if they land safely, hammering A to construct a new lantern will continue the fight.

There are single-player campaigns and multiplayer modes to select from on the main menu, the entire package has been wrapped up in some excellent presentation and, while it isn't the cheapest Xbox Live Indie game out there, *Ninja Crash* has some pedigree, earning itself a runner-up place in the 2012 Dream Build Play competition.





HOMEBREW HEROES



EACH YEAR THE ABBUC SOFTWARE COMPETITION PRODUCES SOME INTERESTING NEW GAMES FOR THE ATARI 8-BIT. MARTIN "MATOSIMI" SIMECEK HAS BEEN BEHIND SOME OF THOSE GAMES AND WE WANTED TO KNOW A LITTLE MORE ABOUT HIS LATEST ONE

Q&A

***Ridiculous Reality* is based on the flash game *Continuity*, but what inspired you to convert it?**
I liked the concept of *Continuity* and ever since I played it for first time I considered it very doable for the 8-bit Atari. I like to create something different, not just a conversion and this looked like great "material" for such a thing. I coded some proof of concepts in 2010, but then returned to *h3x0r Deluxe* and *Ridiculous Reality* was frozen until summer 2012.

You've made some fairly sweeping changes in regards to the visuals, how did those come about?
Well, my first design was not very different to *Continuity*. After this project got its momentum, I decided that I couldn't finish it for the Abbuc deadline alone, so asked others to help me. Luckily Adam Wachowski signed up and surprised me with his great design.

Can you tell us about any particularly good or bad moments during the conversion process?
A good moment was when I realised the potential of this game, when a small project turned into a big game full of great music and graphics that I started loving. Bad moments were mainly during the final hours before the deadline, because the game still had some bugs and graphic glitches, but I fixed them eventually.

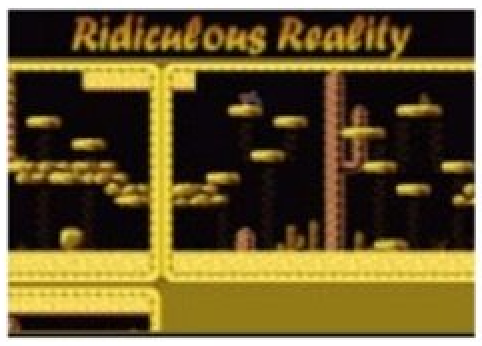
Is converting a game like this easier or harder than starting from scratch?
The game idea is what is important and that's what we borrowed from *Continuity*, everything else is ours so I wouldn't call it conversion. I had some ideas to enhance *Continuity*'s gameplay but was unable to code it, not because it was impossible, but because we were very short on time. Still, I have to admit it's always easier to start building a game on a concept that is already tested and proven.

Would you have done anything differently with hindsight?
No, nothing at all. I'm very glad I could create *Ridiculous Reality* together with Adam Wachowski, Michal Radecki and Adam Powroznik. They contributed considerable effort to make design and sound of game in premium quality.

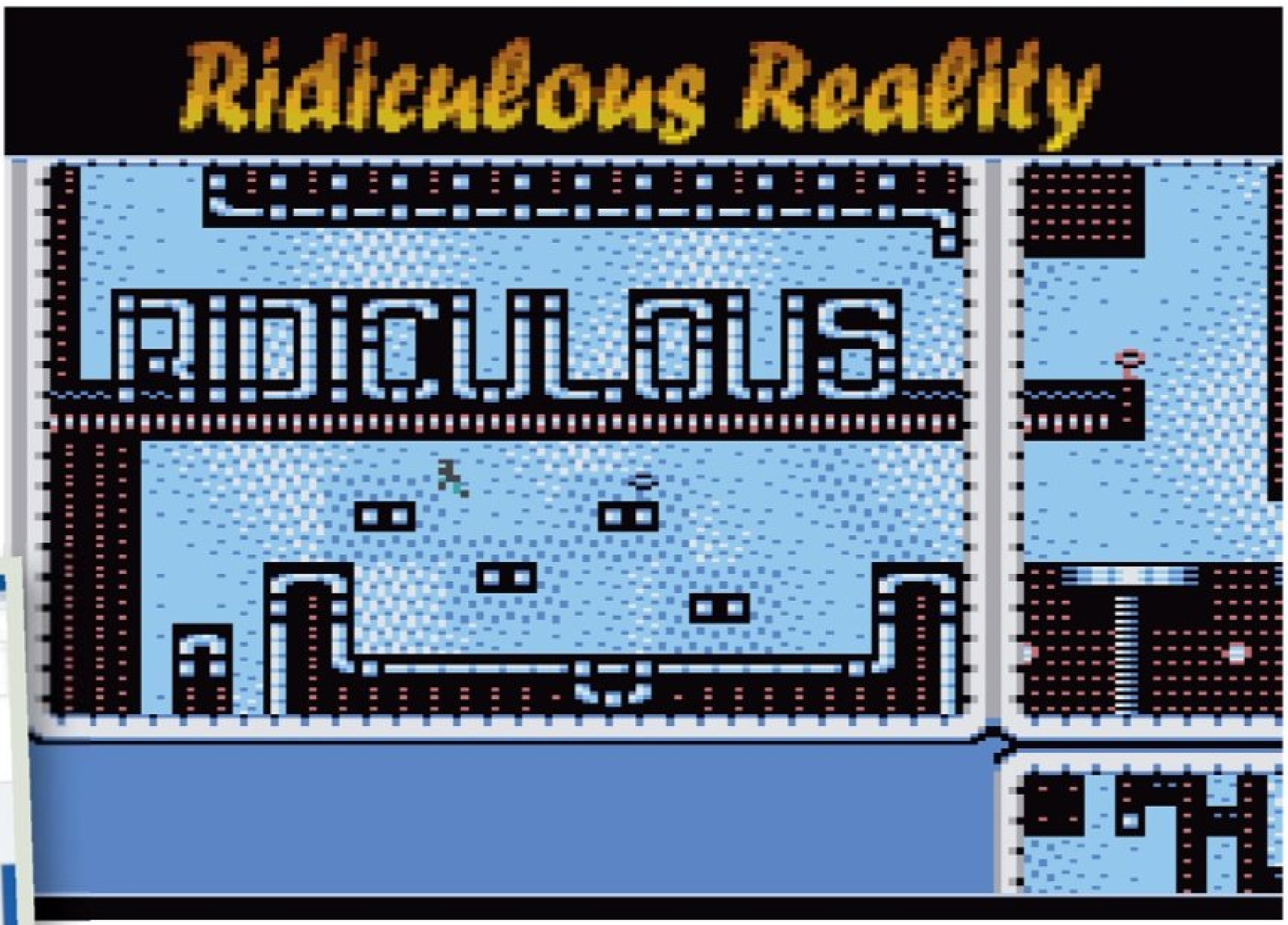
And finally, can you talk about what you're currently working on?
Currently I'm working on a NTSC version of *RR* which will be hopefully released at same time as PAL version. It is almost done; just a few details have to be polished. There is also the possibility that a cart version will be published too. I have other frozen projects "trapped in the closet", so maybe I will revive one of them and the best candidate from this group would be a colourful *Tetris*-like game for two players which I saw on Sega about six years ago. Again just proof of concept was created a long time ago, but I have not worked on it since then.

I have also some new ideas, some Flash games I found interesting so maybe I will start to work on something new inspired by them. *RR* is my first game that combines arcade elements with logic. It is more attractive than just a pure logical game and it has higher potential to be generally enjoyed by players. So I would say my next game will be probably game with a hero… maybe similar to one from *RR*. But first I have to take long deep breath to start a new (and of course better) Atari project.

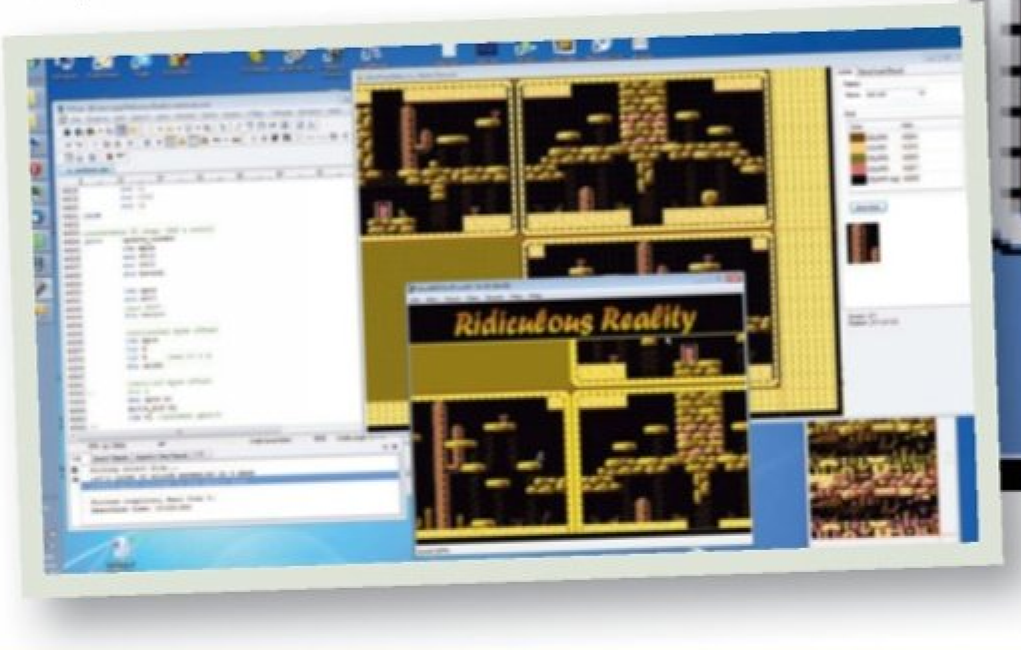
» [Atari 8-bit] And slide to the left…





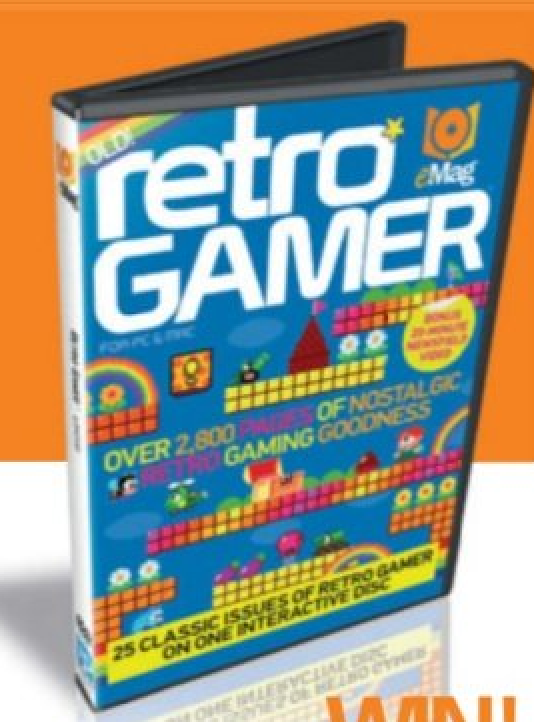


» [Atari 8-bit] How to build a *Ridiculous Reality*.



MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**



WIN!

Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our latest eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 3**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words, or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…

STAR LETTER

ARE YOU ELITE?



Dear Retro Gamer,

I've never felt as excited as I do right now. There is a Kickstarter project by David Braben, who is planning to bring back *Elite*! This is absolutely amazing news and I feel like a tiny child again. I'll never forget the first time that I played *Elite*, as it will stay with me forever. I vividly remember going around to see my best friend Dean Staddon, because he wanted to show me the new computer he had received for his eleventh birthday. I was less than impressed when he proudly showed me his BBC Micro, the very same computer we had at school. "Don't worry," he said, possibly sensing my lack of enthusiasm. "Take a look at this, it's amazing." That game was *Elite* and from the moment I saw the Cobra Mark III spinning majestically in space I was hooked. I loved films like *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*, and *Elite* was the closest thing I had to reliving those epic movies. You could imagine my excitement then when I saw the news that *Elite* would be returning. All my precious childhood memories came flooding back and I felt like a small child again. I now have my own son, and hopefully in a couple of years time he'll be able to experience the same magic that I did in 1984.

Michael Dean

That's a lovely story, Michael. The funding was still ongoing as we went to press, but we're confident that David will secure the funding he needs. You can also hear more from David himself as we've interviewed him on page 8.

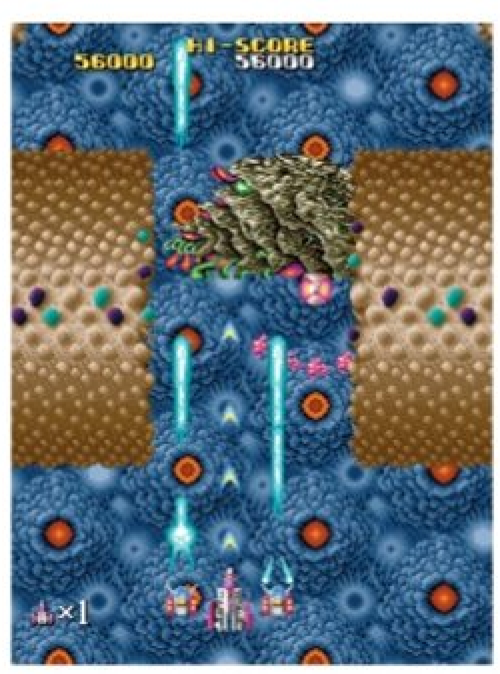
HELP NEEDED

Dear Darran,

I'm trying to remember an old shoot-'em-up that I used to play in my local arcade, and so far I'm drawing a blank. I can't really remember too much about it other than the ship's guns could be switched around and that one of the bosses was a giant armadillo, which also looked like a slug. I know you love shooters so I was hoping that you could maybe help me out. I'd love to know if it was on a home console too.

Mark Tucker

You're in luck, Mark, as Darran vividly remembers playing it. In fact he used to own it once upon a time. The game in question is called *Armed Formation F* and was first released in 1988. The armadillo like creature is the first boss you encounter. It wasn't a massive hit and was only released in Japan on PC Engine. We reckon it's a pretty decent conversion, however.



» [Arcade] We took time out of a busy day to get this for you. Because you're worth it.

NIGHTS INTO SCHEMES

Dear Retro Gamer,

What on earth was Darran smoking when he gave *NiGHTS* such a high score in last month's issue? It was rubbish when it was released in 1996 and it's rubbish now. Now I've rarely played *NiGHTS* because I don't care for that sort of thing, but even I can see that this is a very dubious score. Especially when you consider all the horrendous controls issue that the game apparently has (I've not played the new game, but have seen a comparison video). I like **Retro Gamer**, but it's hard to believe your scores when you give ridiculous praise to badly broken games.

Jason Masters

» [Saturn] Jason might not like *NiGHTS* but we do, so here's another picture of *Christmas NiGHTS*!



Thanks for taking the time to write in to us Jason. The reason we gave *NiGHTS* such a high score, was because it's a stunning adaptation of a fantastic game. You clearly don't like the game, and haven't played it, so we're confused as to why you've actually written in. Still, it gives us an excuse to print another *NiGHTS* screen, so thanks for that.

PSP. WHERE IS IT?

Come on, Retro Gamer,

You're getting tardy. You promised a feature on the PSP about six months ago and it

THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY. . .

This issue's covers that nearly happened



DARRAN

We were keen to run with a SCUMM cover, as LucasArts has made a superb range of games that utilise the engine over the years. It's hard to get excited about an actual engine, as opposed to a recognisable name or franchise, so we decided against it.



STUART

The Bullfrog logo is extremely recognisable and the company has made some fantastic games over the years. But putting a company on the front cover is always something of a hard sell, as your audience won't necessarily recognise them. We'd also just run an Ultimate cover, so were keen to try something different.





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CONTACT US

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Email: retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

still hasn't appeared yet. There's an amazing range of retro compilations, and titles inspired by retro franchises on it, so it's mind-boggling that you've not run anything substantial on it yet. I'd love to see coverage on *Jeanne d'Arc, Hammerin' Hero, Silent Hill: Shattered Memories* and *SoulCalibur: Broken Destiny*. They are perfectly suitable for coverage in the magazine and would make for a great read. You could also do an in-depth article on the console's many compilations (I love the Capcom ones) and the fact that it's become something of a bastion for old school JRPGs. Please make this happen. I'm desperate to read it.

A PSP fan

Don't worry, we're still planning a feature on the PSP, but we're also aware how some readers feel about coverage of more recent consoles. We'll most likely put something together some time in 2013.



» **[PSP] There are a fantastic range of compilations on PSP. This *Street Fighter II* shot is from *Capcom Classics Reloaded*.**

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Star Wars VII

We've been discussing our choices for directors. Stuart feels that Ang Lee would be a great choice, as he's got a great visual style and is good with character development. Darran wants Matthew Vaughan so he can hear Luke Skywalker say f*, while Jon doesn't know, but doesn't want J.J. Abrams or Michael Bay involved.**

SIGNED DEAN

Dear Retro Gamer,

I'm a long-time subscriber but first-time writer. I love this magazine and I especially love the huge nostalgia rush I get on a monthly basis when it lands on the doormat. I've not had much of a reason to write in before now… but on 4 November I met Roger Dean! Not only did I meet him, he signed my copy of issue 108 of **Retro Gamer**! He was in the process of preparing for an event marking the exhibition of his work at www.tradingboundaries.com just north of Brighton.

Apparently I'm a very lucky guy, as a chap that works at the exhibition told me that he only ever signs his own work. I think it helped that I bought a limited edition calendar which I also had signed by him.

Anyway… Do I have the only issue 108 signed by Roger Dean?

Keep up the great work,

James Andrews



» **All right, James. We are very jealous of you.**

That's really impressive, James. As far as we know you've got the only signed copy. And that makes us very jealous, sorry, we meant very happy for you. Nice work!

From the forum

» To have your say visit www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

What was your favourite Mike Singleton game?

Morkin
The Lords of Midnight was my first introduction to his games, which I borrowed from a school friend. Didn't have a clue at the time what I was doing, but much fun was had. And in 2008, I bought and loved *Race Driver: Grid*, which I've only just found out that he worked on.

ZeroCipher
Dark Sceptre, one of the first batch of Spectrum games I owned, I remember playing it as it was quite daunting at the time (Being seven years old, it was a bit advanced for me) but I kept playing. More recently I played *Indiana Jones And The Emperor's Tomb*, which was a fun game.

SirClive
Dark Sceptre. Stunning graphics and an atmospheric tale to boot. I remember plotting the graphics out on graph paper. Not sure why though.

Naitch
Dark Sceptre was the first of his games I played on the Speccy. Then of course I fell in love with *The Lords Of Midnight* and *Doomdark's Revenge* – timeless!!

psj3809
The Lords Of Midnight. Epic game on the Speccy, didn't have a clue what to do at first but slowly got into it. An 8-bit classic.

Bobs
Personally I always enjoyed playing *Snake Pit* the most. Just a simple enjoyable game, which was so playable in its day (I never really 'got' *The Lords Of Midnight*).

Mire Mare
No doubt it's *The Lords Of Midnight* and I say that with utter conviction. Mike Singleton didn't just create one of the best ever 8-bit games; he created a huge new world that rivalled Middle-earth. The game strikes an amazing chord with me. It seems to take on a life of its own every time I play it and yet it allows enough freedom to encourage my imagination to be part of the game.

Dave300
Midwinter 2: Flames of Freedom.

paranoid marvin
The great thing about Mike Singleton is that he always looked beyond the horizon of what was possible; a true legend of gaming and a sad loss..

merman
The one I played most is probably one of the least well-known by Mike – *Quake Minus One* on the C64. The Actionscaping technique created underwater roads that had to be freed from rebel control. Tricky controls and an unusual weapon system demand patience to master, but I really like it. And worth mentioning his input to *Star Trek: The Rebel Universe* as producer/designer, steering the project to completion after the Beyond buyout.

sirclive1
The Lords Of Midnight is my favourite Mike Singleton game, it's also my all-time favourite game and has been since first playing it.

kiwimike
The Lords Of Midnight is the one I've enjoyed the most.

NorthWay
I respected [his games] for their depth, complexity, and technical achievements.

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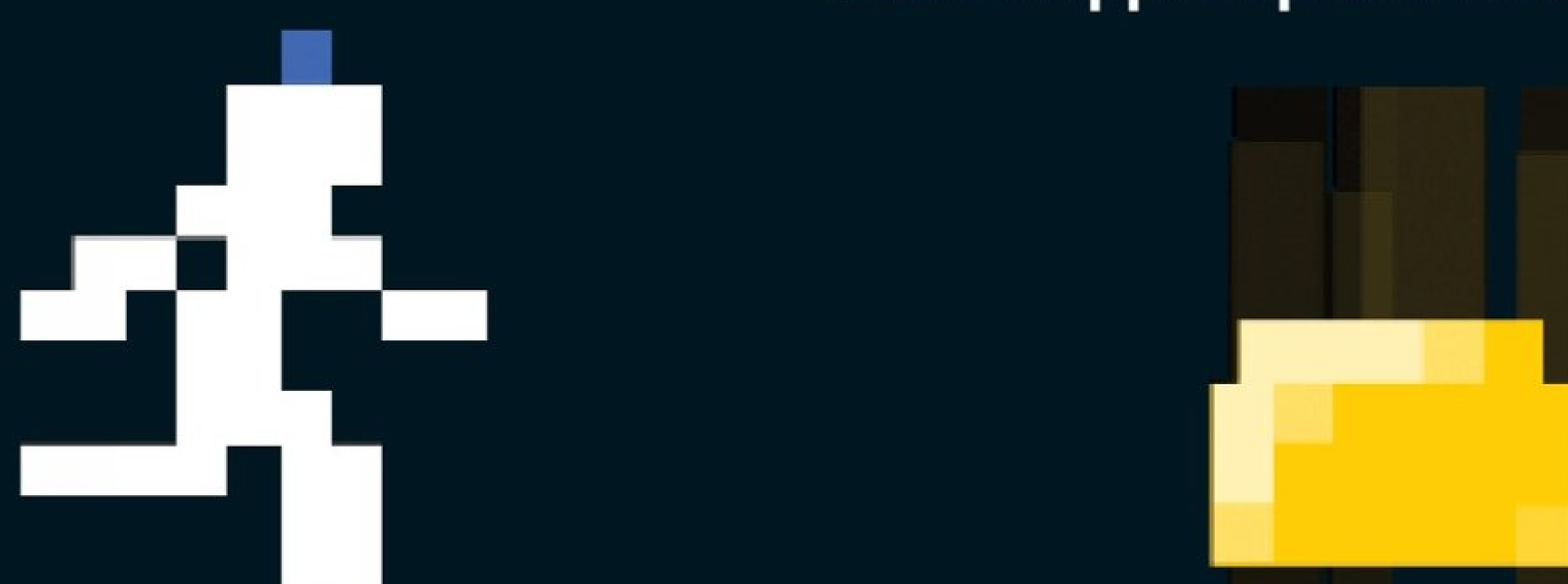
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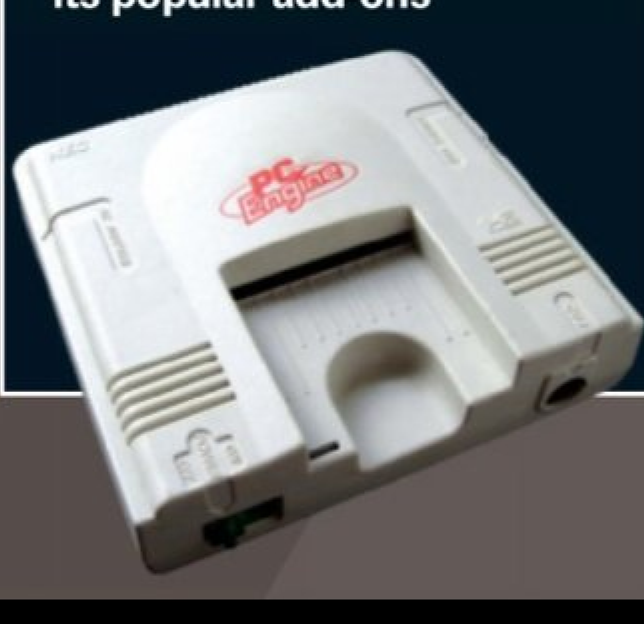
As **Lode Runner** turns 30, designer Douglas E Smith reveals the origins of the classic Apple II platformer



Also inside

PC Engine

■ With NEC's machine now celebrating its 25th year, we chart the evolution of the astonishing 8-bit console and its popular add-ons





Warcraft

■ Discover how Blizzard software threw Orcs and Humans together and created the smash real-time strategy hit for the PC and Mac

Carrier Command

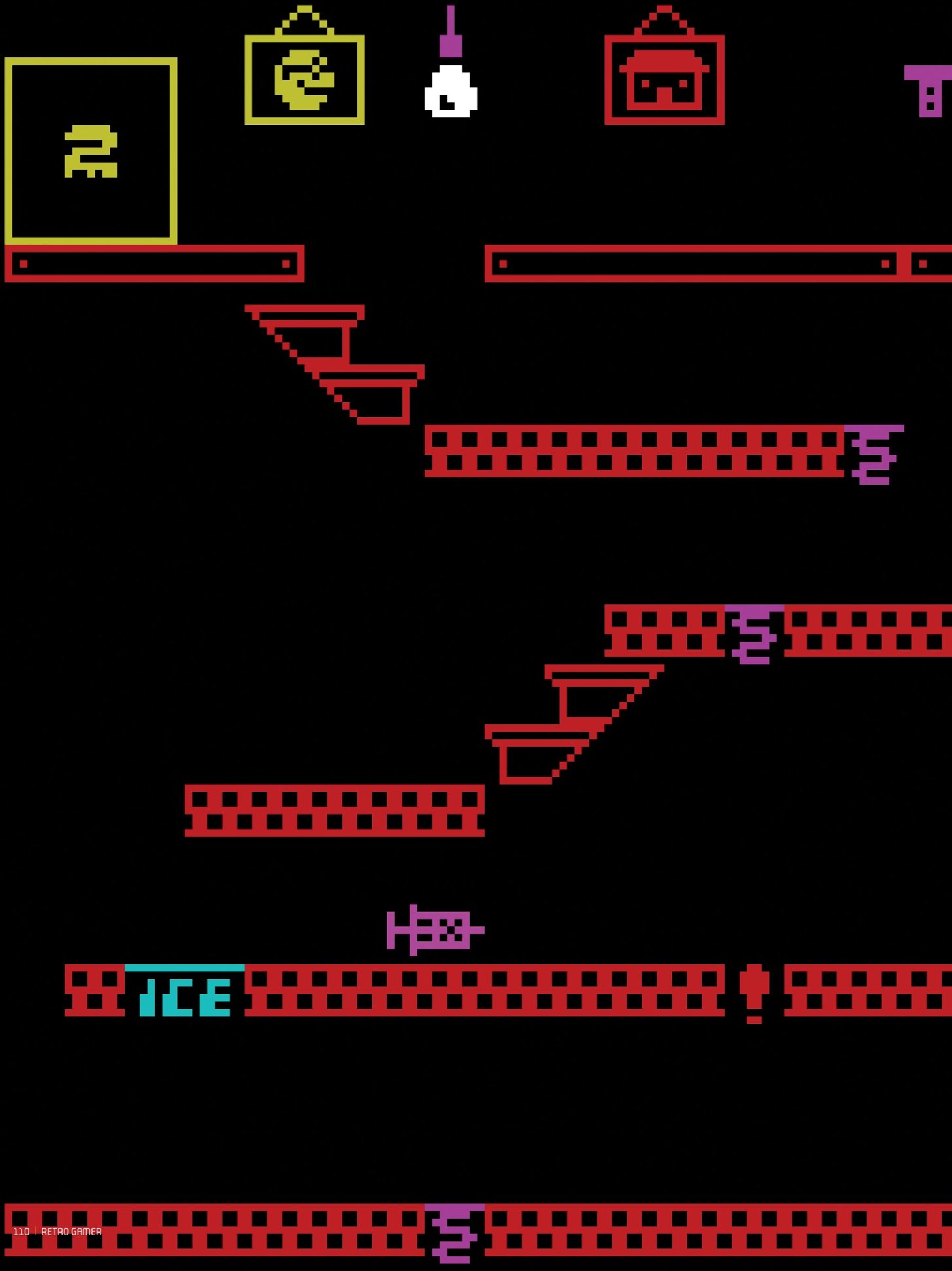
■ Key members of Realtime Games reveal how they turned *Carrier Command* into a seminal game that helped change the face of gaming

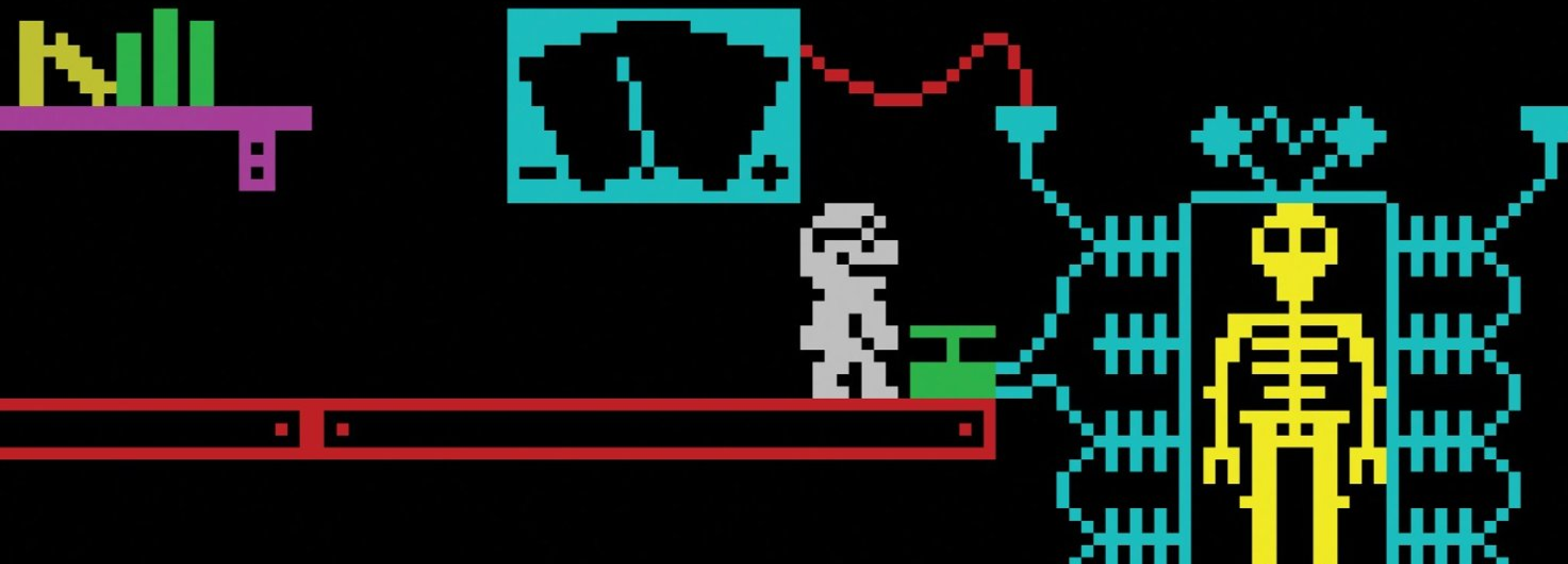




Shahid Ahmad

■ The 8-bit coder on meeting Matthew Smith and converting *Jet Set Willy*, handling C64 ports for Ultimate and scoring music

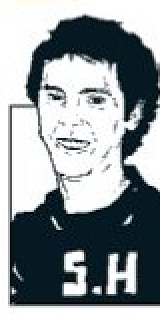

ICE



Frank N Stein

MANIC MAKER

» RETROREVIVAL



» PSS
» 1984
» ZX SPECTRUM

***Frank N Stein* might look like a *Manic Miner* clone, but it is actually a very different kind of beast. In fact, it plays like a Frankenstein's monster (pun certainly intended) of Mathew Smith's surreal platformer and building-themed examples of the genre, like *Jetpac* and *Automania*.**

Written by Colin Stewart, *Frank N Stein* finds you in the role of the titular re-animator. In *Frank N Stein*, the doctor himself is portrayed as a cartoonish version of the infamous professor who dabbles with unorthodox science to create a human-like creature that turns into a bit of a monster.

The levels of *Frank N Stein* are obviously teeming with deadly moving objects, and it is your job to guide Frank around the various single-screen stages of his mansion safely. Your task is to collect the seven parts of his mishmash of a monster in the correct order – starting with the head, moving to the upper torso, and ending with the legs.

Frank N Stein is pretty challenging, and this is chiefly because Frank cannot jump over his enemies at will. Instead, he is forced to use static pink coils to jump them and gain access to higher platforms. These coils are situated around the level and this means that planning and timing your actions is crucial, as you must carefully observe the movement of enemies to ensure you don't get caught or trapped into a corner with no way of escaping.

To make his mission even more difficult, Frank must also be wary of the shoddy electric work that's been done around his house (you'd think a man of Frank's background would have that well and truly sorted out), as stepping on a live wire momentarily stuns him and puts him more at risk from the enemies. This adds a level of tactics and timing to *Frank N Stein*.

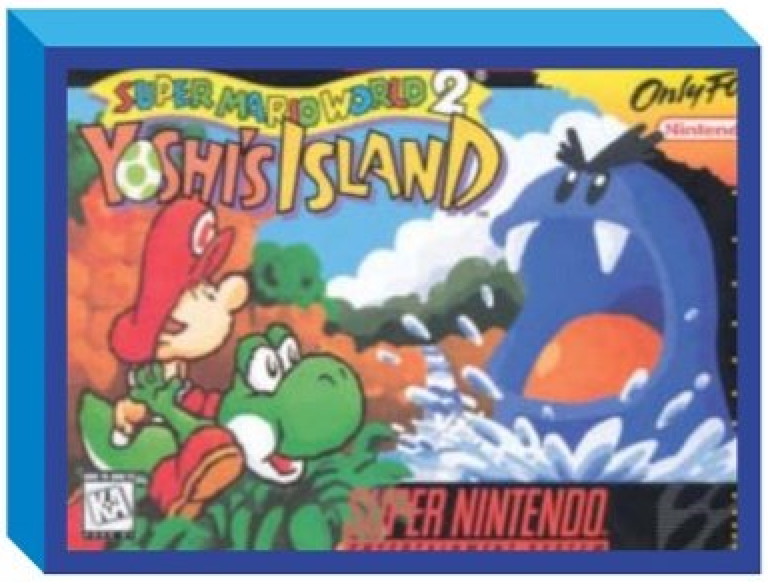
With a neat homage little to *Donkey Kong* on every other stage, which sees you helping Frank get to the top of the screen to deactivate his creation, *Frank N Stein* is a challenging, unique and addictive platformer. And if you enjoy the original, be sure to check out Colin's 2011 reboot, *Frank N Stein Re-booted*, which contains all new levels and enemies to tackle.


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SUPER MARIO WORLD 2: YOSHI'S ISLAND

» A Mario sequel with a twist, Yoshi's Island saw lovable dino Yoshi take centre stage to help unite the Mario Bros. with their parents, and set the wheels in motion for the twins' future platform adventures. So does Yoshi complete his quest and prove he's cut out to be a stork? Let's find out…



01

» Yoshi arrives at Bowser's Castle, and Magikoopa Kamek weaves some magic to blow his master up to super size. As the castle starts to crumble around Yoshi, he starts frantically lobbing hard-boiled eggs to finish the fight.



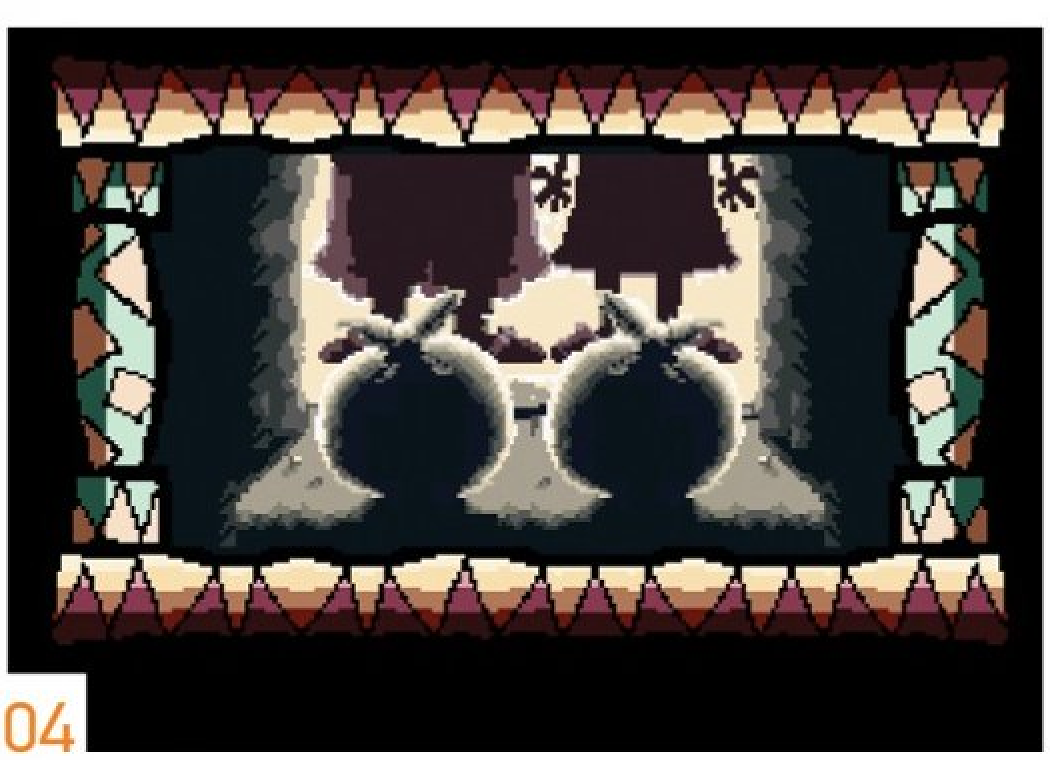
02

» Yoshi finally defeats Bowser. Mario is reunited with Luigi, and the stork is tasked with delivering the brothers to their parents. It's certainly been an adventure in babysitting, to almost quote the title of a Chris Columbus movie.



03

» Now able to complete its journey, the stork sets off and takes Mario and Luigi away from Yoshi Island and to Mushroom Kingdom, where mom and dad wait anxiously. And we thought the boys were born in Brooklyn, NY.



04

» Hearing the sound of two baby-shaped parcels hitting the door mat, Mr and Mrs Mario awake and rush excitedly to the front door of their Mushroom-shaped home. They open the door and are delighted to see two bundles waiting for them.



05

» It's the Italian twins they ordered from eBaby! Happy but annoyed that they arrived a few days later than the seller promised, the following day they leave some satisfactory feedback, and then place a silly bid on a giant gorilla.


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THE LORD OF MIDNIGHT

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TO AN INDUSTRY LEGEND